

# Animal-Attentive Queer Theories

by

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## **Introduction**

I have always lived in a family that included dogs. I remember my Mom saying to me from a very young age that we were just “dog people. Dogs are always a part of our family.” Stories told at family gatherings invariably include dog stories such as the college years of my Dad’s companion dog Buddy, a German-Sheppard Lab mix, who was my first dog companion when I was born. Buddy was never on a leash. My Dad and Buddy somehow remained in immediately responsive relation to one another within a bond that could only be described as intuitive or extra-linguistic. My Dad, an economics PhD graduate student at the University of Utah, had to enter buildings that did not allow dogs and would leave his unlocked bike in a bike rack. Buddy would remain next to his bike, guarding it but more importantly patiently waiting for my Dad’s return while indulging in the affectionate hands of human passersby. Without fail, the end of every story would end with Buddy still in the same spot where my Dad left him, and off they would go on their next adventure together. I cannot help but imagine Buddy’s world and how he must have perceived the subtle movements or phrases my Dad used to communicate his desires, affection, and commands. For Buddy to remain next to my Dad’s bike through his classes without any history of authoritative or discipline-based behavior classes must be evidence of the great connection that existed between my Dad and him that invariably lead to our family being “dog people.”

My Mom, an undergraduate at the time, recalls that Buddy could always be found under my Dad’s desk in the economics department, or keeping in stride with my Dad as he biked across campus. Buddy was never leashed to made to stop at

intersections or stay away from more aggressive animal others. Dad would help guide Buddy in a human symbolic world with simple phrases like ‘stay here’, ‘come over to me’, ‘let’s go over there’ or the screech of his bike’s old breaks, which would invariably mean they were slowing down or stopping somewhere. Buddy remained with our family through my parents meeting, dating, marrying, relocation to California, and he even witnessed the first few years of my life. Stories of Buddy’s college years are just a small amount of the plethora of family memories amassed from his life as a part of our family. After Buddy passed away, my mom on her birthday rescued a German-Sheppard Lab mix named Samantha. Having little connection to Buddy besides a few early childhood memories, I cannot say I learned about or observed my Dad and Buddy’s connection first hand, but I was fortunate enough later in life to forge such a connection with my companion dog Bear, a black Labrador.

### *Bear*

We adopted Bear and his littermate Spunky-Tasha from the neglectful care of their previous owners who moved away, leaving them behind to fend for themselves. My Mom, having lost Sammy to old age, attached herself to Spunky, while I got to know Bear. As littermates they seemed to have their own connection—one would always look after the other—but Bear seemed to understand me on a level I could not explain. The picture of reciprocity, we would often sit together on my bed, trading company for belly scratches. While Spunky and Bear were both leashed on walks, Bear seemed uninterested in pulling to reach different scents or other dogs but rather always seemed content to walk in stride with me. When they were feeling more

energetic, Spunky, Bear and I would head up the trails behind our house, which allowed them to go off the leash. Spunky would take full advantage of this by sprinting and zigzagging up the trails while Bear and I would lag behind, climbing the steep trails. I remember the moments when his pace would slow and eventually stop, and I would interpret this as his way of telling me that he was ready to turn around.

Despite being littermates, Bear and Spunky could not have been more different. While Spunky would accompany my Mom on her morning runs, Bear seemed content to keep me company by sleeping in my bed or sleeping upside down on my room's floor in his favorite position—legs up in the air. It was within these moments that I began to see the stories of my Dad's connection with Buddy communicated through my relationship with Bear. Our extra-linguistic communications seemed to be based in a touch that communicated much more than a purely somatic pleasure. After my Dad's death I was prone to extreme anxiety and an increased severity in my already-present insomnia. It would be hard for me to characterize my interactions with Bear as anything but companionship. The comfort he provided me was not as an animate object that reacted to my input but rather as an individual whom I valued as a true friend—a significant other. In moments when I became anxious or unable to sleep, I could always count on Bear to lick the side of my face or drop to the floor and stick his legs up into the air in an attempt to get me to rub his belly. Because he had no trouble sleeping himself, Bear's warm sleeping presence could always help me to calm my mind and fall asleep even in my most troubled moments. I always had difficulty articulating to my friends and others the deep camaraderie I felt living with Bear. Even now as I write this I find it hard to

express our stories, experiences, personalities, and communications in any legible manner.

His becoming in my life and reactions to my actions seemed based on a connection that transcended the dog/owner models of subjectivity and rhetoric available to me to describe our relationship. This thesis is in part motivated by the inability I felt in describing my relationship with Bear in any way that truly reflected the terms of our engagement with one another. Drawing upon Donna Haraway's own reflections on her relationships with companion dogs, I have used rhetoric such as 'companion', 'engagement', and 'significant other' to describe the ways Bear and I intra-related with one another. While these terms may be common in my family's engagement with significant animal others, the treatment of animals within larger society and certain academic practices relies on a language of instrumentality, objectification, and sado-humanism.

Discussions surrounding what should be cared about and what can be considered living and worthy of moral attention are centered around the debates of animal ethics, rights, and community formation. This thesis begins to illuminate the borders and walls that exist between disciplines (e.g. the natural sciences, queer theories, feminist ethics-of-care, and animal studies) that mirror the boundaries humans construct between our lives and our deaths. While some would argue that nonhuman animals are merely animate machines that respond to stimuli, others would argue against such a view as cold and rational, favoring instead a more inclusive and less rigid circle of moral value. Humans have expanded the discussions and writings of death by exploring its ramifications in the ways that we grieve. Language is limited and oppressive in its inability to grasp the realities of the intra-

connections of human life within a larger world formation. Practices such as factory farming, animal testing, and animal exhibition rely upon the non- or misrepresentation of animal suffering and experience. The anthropocentrism and speciesism within certain ethics of representation, especially queer theories, leads to the objectification and disavowal rather than the inclusion of animal others as individuals in relation to each other and within a community. Rather than rely upon a sado-humanist framework of subjectivity, rights, and becoming, we can move outside of purely rationalist accounts that fail to describe and take account of animal lives and work to improve the lives of animals and others around us.

### *My Arrival*

I cannot say that I arrived at this project organically. The question in this thesis are not problems I have always thought about or wanted to fix my entire life but rather culminated at a very specific moment in my academic history. I was a devotee to rational and logical thinking. I had subscribed to the scientific method and the protocols of empiricism to solve the basic problems I faced within my life. From the first year of college I was a nerd of the highest order. I took advanced seminars in the Chemistry, Mathematics, and Molecular Biology & Biochemistry departments. To me, natural science was my world. I was convinced I would never write an essay again and that I would avoid the written language within the humanities as much as possible.

My first year I took a first year initiative course called “Sex, Morality, and the Law” with Professor Lori Gruen, which was crosslisted in the Feminist Gender and Sexuality Studies department. I cannot say I was excited to take a ‘feminist’ course,

but I was more than willing to take a class with the word ‘sex’ in it. Maybe it was the cheap thrill that I got when talking to my mother or grandfather about a class on laws surrounding sex, pornography, and prostitution, or the life lessons in ethics and choices we discovered as a class, but I was hooked on what I understood to be extremely provocative and important topics.

As my interests began to diversify between the natural sciences and the social sciences, I took a junior colloquium called “Critical Queer Studies.” I hoped it would provide me with the foundation for my impending senior thesis that I was determined to write on some notion of queer theory or politics. I was taken with the radical ideas of self-transfiguration and societal melt down/build up that I saw within the writing of the authors we discussed in class. I noted that the rational processes of the natural sciences were not mimicked within the writings, but that instead, the representations of connections, embodiments, forces, and movements studied in biology were found within queer theories. However, I found a clear resistance to the direct engagement of theories, writings, and understandings of the natural sciences within queer theories.

In a moment that many lovers of feminist science studies could understand, I was drawn to the work of Donna Haraway for her inclusion of biological models. Within her writing I saw the potential for the upheaval of the natural sciences—a complete shaking of the foundational theories of model systems and representationalism on which the biochemical kinetics lab where I researched relied. It was true that the foundations of objectivity, transgenics, model systems, and protein assays relied on what Haraway called the researcher’s ‘God-trick.’ The scientist would always end just below God but high enough to survey and manipulate the organic and nonhuman below. One gap, however, seemed to stand in my way of bringing

queer theories and the natural science together. This fact was made imminently clear in a discussion I had with the professor of the class concerning the argument I made in my final research project.

Drawing from papers on the scientific studies of queerness in human and nonhuman animals, as well as Haraway's work on the subjectivity theories that resided within immunology, I wrote a paper concerning queer theory and my understanding of 'Animal Theory.' I argued passionately that queer theory had the potential to insightfully add to the troubled relations that existed within nonhuman lives, natural science research, inorganic forces, and immune-based or biochemically-based theories of subjectivity in general. Something that I then called "Animaling Queer Theory" I now call "Animal-Attentive Queer Theories." What struck me so intensely was the moment the professor agreed with these statements but bluntly asked, "Why should queer theory care about animals?"

At the time, I felt the answer was surely obvious, but I had no words to express it. I was wrapped up in the queer and feminist critiques that transformed the nature/culture, animal/human, and other binaries that scientific research relied. In a moment of weakness I attempted to show the multiple ways that queer theories could be of service to the natural sciences but I was unwilling to turn the lens of transformation upon the queer theories I cited. The ensuing paper failed to answer my professor's question, but it is my sincere desire that this thesis thoroughly answer such an important question.

What has become clear to me while writing such a large piece is the ways in which a theoretical or practical academic goal is not accomplished through the leaps and bounds of grandiose writing, but rather small, shuffling steps that attempt to

connect one dot to the other. I situate myself as a white, able-bodied male writing on the representational and practical ethics of speaking for and living with animal and abject others within a queer feminist framework and perspective. Committed to ethically represent both the DNA and proteins that reside in every one of my cells and the abject others within hetero-, homo- and human-normative society, I offer this thesis as a collection of animal-attentive queer theories. In Chapter 1 I map a genealogy of the key moments in queer theories that many histories and inheritances construct the sado-humanist basis on which queer theories rely. I argue that if queer theories are truly going to academically and politically retain their radical stance against normativity and social hierarchies then these theories must ontologically move away from the self-defeating logic of sado-humanism towards an animal-attentive intersectionality. In Chapter 2 I describe many facets of what has recently been called animal studies. I explore its small fledgling history from an animal rights and liberation movement into its contemporary form as an academic interdisciplinary approach that argues against sado-humanist logics within many disciplines. Animal studies demonstrates the ways in which sado-humanism is predicated on maintaining human/animal binary for the sake of human exceptionalism, speciesism, and the disavowal, death, and abjection of animal and nonhuman others. In Chapter 3 I attempt to bring together insights from queer theories and animal studies in an effort to illustrate at least an initial approach towards formulating animal-attentive queer theories. My theories are those of relations, connections, and non/in/organic forces. They speak of becomings rather than beings, in the hope of describing an animate and diversely attentive world where life is affirmatively granted, represented, and protected rather than negatively disavowed.

## **Chapter 1: Queer Theories**

The relationship between queer theory and the natural sciences could be described as passively antagonistic at best. Early queer engagement with practices that were considered within the natural, or at least psycho-natural sciences, such as sexology, produced scathing critiques of the multiple ways in which social categories of oppression and privilege were read onto differently pathologized bodies. The oppression and abjection of queer ‘others’ were justified through scientifically based conclusions and research. Initially the scientific research was used to understand the ways in which homosexuality was marked on the body by the subjects’ essential nature. Queer theory critiqued this kind of research by sexologists and others that produced results by discursively constructing homosexual bodies through exaggerated and culturally-biased research methods (Terry 1995). I argue that this type of engagement is typical of queer critiques of the research and methodologies of the natural sciences. Feminists and critical race theorists also criticized the many ways in which the natural sciences had pathologized and constructed understandings of racialized and female (sexualized) bodies through similar normative practices (Terry1995). These attempts at a ‘biologizing’ sexuality, subjectivity, and difference were rightly rejected for their privilege and normative bias but an unfortunate consequence of this early engagement with scientific research was a continuing disease between queer and feminist theories and the natural sciences.

This uneasy historical dynamic, as well as an inherited humanism within queer theories, have made any sort of engagement with animal others impossible,

slight or anthropocentric. By tracing a genealogy of what I argue are queer theory's main predecessors and influences, I hope to show the multiple disciplines, histories and writings that contribute to formation of different queer theories as they historically have been and currently are understood. Through this genealogy I focus on the many ways that different queer theories have inherited a discursive humanism that places at its core a human/animal divide predicated on certain necessary (linguistic and mental) capacities of the queer subject. I switch sometimes between queer theory and queer theories as a way of illustrating the multiplicity within the field of and writing on 'queer theory'. While it is true that some writing on (post)humanism and affirmative readings of science could be considered in the realm of queer theory (notably Donna Haraway's writing stands out as the epitome of queer science studies scholarship), it is the reality that the majority of writing fails to critique or at least problematize the implicit humanism within queer theories. This sort of humanism has led to the popular formation of subjectivity within queer theories to maintain the necessary capacity of language and human-based communication as its parameters. This theory of subjectivity has prevented a deep engagement with the lives, experiences, and suffering of animal others due to their fundamental lack of human speech and discursive (cultural) practices. It is this humanism that fuels the self-defeating logic within queer theories that purport to be against social norms, binaries, and hierarchal power structures while at the same time basing their theories on an implicit sado-humanism<sup>1</sup> that disavows animal others.

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<sup>1</sup> Sado-humanism is a term borrowed from Zipporah Weisberg that conveys the ways in which violent humanism is always a sadistic practice against the animal in its disavowal, domination, consumption, projection, and anthropocentrism through the maintenance of a human/animal binary (Weisberg 2009).

I do not want to parallel this genealogy of the debate with the nature/culture binary by stating that one is all nature and the other is all culture. Although this is one possible interpretation of some work in the critiques that queer theory offers of gay and lesbian studies, it would be far too reductive. For example, Judith Butler's work on the theory of performativity has sparked interpretations of 'all culture no nature' subjectivity—a discursive subjectivity. This interpretation would hold that there is nothing that is pre-cultural in its mattering or formation. In response to activism in the 1990s, queer theories attempted "to produce a program, and when the theory addresses the broad issue of queerness, the program is expected to explain queer life" (Berlant, Warner 1993, 348). The theory of performatively produced sexualities and subjects that allowed for a radical critique of naturalized institutions of sexuality such as allopathic medicine and government institutions and programs (Duggan 1994). Freedom from earlier discourses that revolved around naturalized sexualities furthered queer political agendas. For queer theories to come together with animal studies in meaningful and productive ways, many queer theories must undergo a full-scale theoretical shift and rejection of its implicit humanism in order to produce what I call animal-attentive queer theories. If queer theories are to truly actualize the potential within a queer critique, they must reject a sado-humanist logic as self-defeating and work towards animal-attentive queer theories that do not rely on a human/animal binary.

I start my genealogy of queer theories/scholarship in hopes of tracing the multiple commitments, politics, theorizings, activisms, epistemologies and histories that come together to form what we as academics generally understand to be queer theory. A cursory engagement with what queer theory entails reveals the multiple

theoretical lineages from which it draws. Queer theory in my argument initially draws on mainly gay and lesbian theories and feminist theories. Of course, queer theory has since drawn on multiple fields (or more specifically has ‘queered’ fields), but it can be argued that many of the commitments, engagements and activist populations have attempted to find coalition within these two larger and relatively older fields. That argument is not to say that feminist theories or gay and lesbian theories can be neatly compartmentalized, but that queer theory has at different times grown out of, borrowed, hijacked or used multiple theoretical models, conclusions and writings from writers/activists/academics working within these two fields. I hope through tracing this history, which I am calling a genealogy, I will not only show the different ways that queer theory has emerged/borrowed from other fields but also expose the implicit humanism that queer theory inherits from its academic and activist predecessors that results in queer theory’s self-defeating logic.

### *Gay and Lesbian Studies*

Queer scholarship has its roots in early homophile and gay liberationist movements that were responsible for the first queer interventions into society. In the early 1940s and 50s, populations were in flux due to the relocation of bodies and desires caused by World War II. John D’Emilio points to this migration and urban formation as providing an impetus for people to explore same-sex desires and sexualities that were previously unavailable in the nuclear family model (Abelove 1993). The capitalist impulse towards wage-labor allowed people to move away from their families, both geographically and financially. This community formation of workers within cities and military bases also sparked the formation of a sort of gay

community. Within barracks and urban centers people could come together in new ways to explore their same-sex desires together. However, with a growing publicity of these desires came a growing backlash by the state. D'Emilio notes that “as the subculture expanded and grew more visible in the post-World War II era, oppression by the state intensified, becoming more systematic and inclusive” (Ibid. 472). Many groups, including homophile organizations, formed in response to the discriminatory gay witch-hunts within government and society.

Homophile groups such as the Daughters of Bilitis and The Mattachine Society used a rhetoric of respect, dignity, liberty, and inclusion against the prejudiced practices of the state, the psychiatric/medical associations, and society. These groups hoped to change cultural perceptions of gays and lesbians so as to promote widespread tolerance and acceptance within society. The common practice in early homophile groups was the use of tactics of acceptance, tolerance and understanding through rational conversations and gradual change. Jagose notes in her history of gay liberation that homophile groups “argued that, apart from their same-sex sexual preferences, they were model citizens, as respectable as heterosexuals, and no more likely to disturb the status quo” (Jagose 1994, 30-1). On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1965 gay men and women from the homophile movement marched on the Independence Mall in Philadelphia carrying signs that read, “Homosexuals are American citizens too” and “15 Million Homosexual Americans ask for equality, opportunity, dignity”. The homophile protesters argued for inclusion of homosexual peoples on the basis that their autonomous liberal citizenship was no different from other citizens. They called for judgment not to be placed upon their sexual or private lives but rather on their personal character or public lives. These calls for tolerance and acceptance were

illustrative of the political goals of the homophile groups at the time.

The sixties were an important decade of cultural, political, and theoretical changes that were significant in forming the ideology of what we now call the gay liberation movement. Writers such as Paul Goodman were deeply influential for many people experiencing grief, repression, and hatred from society at large, and who were displeased with the slow and generally quiet politics of homophile groups.

Goodman wrote, “First, instead of looking for reminders of paradise...*[the subject] must engage in the present hope and effort for paradise...*second, he must identify with paradise by actively *making* the causes of his reality” (Goodman 1965, 101). For liberationists, this proposal for “making” paradise meant a break from past homophile activism in favor of a more radical means of changing and critiquing society. This change did not mean the end of homophile groups but rather a new (youth-centered) movement that stemmed from college campuses, bars, and other youth-oriented organizations. As the common GLF slogan from that era “Out of the closets and into the streets!” suggests, new forms of visibility and direct action would be gay liberationists’ main tactics from then on. This intensified gay visibility, at least initially within urban centers, acted as a radical break from the homophile policies of maintaining the social status quo within protest actions. GLF actions made demands on the state and the public not only for a queer space within society, but more importantly, for social recognition of their lives and desires.

In the summer of 1969, the counter-culture impulse of directly challenging state power touched the movement for gay recognition. The emergent gay liberation movement, identified in the formation of Gay Liberation Front (GLF) groups around the country, employed radical politics of social critique in hopes of changing people’s

prevailing attitudes that viewed homosexual activities as immoral or even sick. Jagose argues “gay liberationists, by contrast [to homophile groups], refused to pander to heterosexual anxieties” or further arguments of inclusion into larger (heterosexual) society, power and privilege (Jagose 1994, 31). Instead gay liberationists “scandalized society with their difference rather than wooing it with claims of sameness. Whereas the homophile movement had come to advocate assimilation, gay liberation was constructed around the notion of a distinctively gay identity” (Ibid. 31). This distinct gay identity for liberationists was key in the movement because it allowed a community to form around that distinct identity—an autonomous liberal subject—which stood in contrast to the pathologized, homosexual identity often publically assigned to same-sex desiring people. Carl Wittmann, a gay liberationist living in San Francisco at the beginning of the gay liberation movement, wrote, “liberation for gay people is defining for ourselves how and with whom we live, instead of measuring our relationship in comparison to straight ones, with straight values” (Jay 1992, 71). While homophile groups accepted the American model of good citizenship, gay liberationists attempted to critique and reformulate these ideals to work for their gay identity and relations, and to create multiple modes of citizenship and subjectivity.

Gay liberation in this sense worked to help society understand that the privileging of certain identities and relations over others is wrong and unjustified. Jagose notes that gay liberationists believed that “dominant formulations of sex and gender categories (and the institutions which supported them) would be eradicated only by gay men and lesbians who, refusing to accept their subaltern status, would destroy the system through literal and symbolic acts of violence” rather than an assimilation into these categories and institutions (Jagose 1994, 37). This refusal to

compromise their lives and subjectivities was key to liberationist assertions that gay identity was a legitimate category of difference no worse than straight identity.

Martha Shelley, a gay liberationist whose piece appeared in the first, mainstream, GLF-centered anthology *Out of the Closets* edited by Karla Jay and Allen Young, wrote, “I will tell you what we want, we radical homosexuals: not for you to tolerate us, or accept us, but to understand us” (Jay 1992, 202). Gay liberationists’ desires were for social legitimacy and visibility (not through heterosexual privilege but without it,) and for the erasure of dominant structures of oppression and difference that situated heterosexuality at the top and perverse homosexuality at the bottom of the scale.

With gay liberation’s social and political ramifications came an academic and cultural coalescing of what has been known as lesbian and gay studies or theory. While it is hard to identify a specific point for the emergence of lesbian and gay theory, *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* edited by Henry Abelove, Michele Barale, and David Halperin collects many of the important pieces that have formed the canon commonly considered to represent lesbian and gay theory. Including theorists such as Eve Sedgwick, Gayle Rubin, D.A. Miller, Lee Edelman, Simon Watney, Esther Newton, Douglas Crimp, Audre Lorde, Sue-Ellen Case, Judith Butler, Teresea de Lauretis, Biddy Martin, Adrienne Rich, Joan Scott, and Monique Wittig, the collection brings together writers from many different disciplines who consider gay and lesbian peoples’ material, cultural and social situations and their intersections with race, class, gender and most importantly sexuality. While some of the writings can be considered to foreshadow or construct (what is now known as) queer theory, many of the writings take as their subject a gay and lesbian identity that was constructed and lived by the gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements of the

previous decades.

The activism and social legibility of gay and lesbian identity in the 1970s and 80s, as proffered by gay liberationists and later activists, work as a sort of identity politics based on a minoritizing logic. By creating a monolithic gay identity, many different civil, medical, and psychiatric issues can be taken on through a minoritizing logic that drew upon many individuals' personal experiences. In terms of political efficacy, a minoritizing logic begins through the creation of an identifiable minority that can make claims on the state as a minority in need of civil liberties and rights. Gay and lesbian identity politics that rely on a minoritized logic are successful in achieving their own agenda. All of the writings on sexuality that were readily accepted as gay and lesbian theories were considered to be in response to larger societal identity formation and politics around gay and lesbian subjectivities. At the center of this claim stood the liberal, humanist subject that was a recognizable and legitimate citizen of the state. This political strategy was effective in the previous movements' goals for recognition and civil rights. For example, modern day groups such as the Human Rights Campaign and the National Center for Lesbian Rights rely on a minoritizing standpoint for their legal arguments. Each organization has a large, annual budget and NCLR headed the recently successful litigation for the California Same-Sex Marriage Case. In its own right, the minoritizing logic is culturally powerful and politically successful.

The liberal subject of both gay and lesbian studies and civil rights discourse was essentially the sexual individual. Same-sex desires were thought to be manifestations of impulses "belonging to a distinct group of similar people" (Hall 2003, 43). In this sense, gay and lesbian studies favored an essentialist theory of

subjectivity as stemming from natural and individually holistic desires. Identity derived from an innate individual sexual and gender formation (one could even use the word “orientation”). Communities of individuals were formed around a shared bond of sexual identity and expression. The creation of a gay community was imperative to the fight for recognition and acceptance by society and gay people themselves. It is important to recall that “lesbians and gays in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have desperately needed ways of affirming themselves in the face of condescension and scorn” (Hall 43). An essentialist approach to subjectivity allowed gays and lesbians to band together in a natural minority in order to counteract the larger homophobic society.

### *Feminist Theories*

While this sort of minoritizing logic is not expressly paralleled in theoretical writings, one can see the roots of this logic within early gay liberation writing, homophile groups, and feminist writing on the subject. Jagose notes that “the recent critique of identity politics...has not arisen simply because the reification of any single identity is felt to be exclusionary” (Jagose 1994, 82). For feminists this critique of singular identity or additional-identity-model should be familiar in discussions of intersectionality. Identity has since been theorized out of its singular positioning and political exchange model. One cannot put on their ‘race hat’, take it off, and then put on their ‘gender hat’ the next moment for the sake of discussion. While strategic essentialism has been identified as politically useful by Gayatri Spivak and other feminists, it comes with the realistic limitations as a model for describing one’s lived experience. In the early 1970s many different feminist theories emerged in attempts to

understand the positionality, social patriarchy, and ways to alleviate the oppression of women. Allison Jaggar summarizes:

Liberal feminists...believe that women are oppressed insofar as they suffer unjust discrimination; traditional Marxists believe that women are oppressed in their exclusion from public production; radical feminists see women's oppression as consisting primarily in the universal male control of women's sexual and procreative capacities; while socialist feminist characterize women's oppression in terms of a revised version of the Marxist theory of alienation. (Jaggar 1983, 354).

The strict delineation between the different strains of theory is of course a theoretical construction but each theory was “associated with a characteristic conception of human nature” which led to later discussions of essentialism within political practice (Ibid., 354). Essentialism is the theoretical and political attempt at identifying a set of core principles or intrinsic qualities that define a subject or person and can be identified within another person as a means of shared experience. Essentialism is commonly aligned with nature-based arguments where there are real or material traits that reside within everyone or a certain group of people—namely within liberal and other feminists as the characteristics that naturally defined womanhood.

Socialist feminists described the ways in which lived experience is not done through singular identities but rather vary intersectionally from person to person, specifically in terms of women. Jaggar notes that “socialist feminist theorists [began] considering seriously the epistemological consequences of the differences as well as the commonalities in women's lives” (Ibid., 386). In this way the discussions of intersectionality were made in contrast to more liberal or Marxist feminist conceptions of womanhood being located within nature or an embodied essentialism. Importantly socialist feminists noted that women's “oppression is constantly changing in form and these forms cannot be ranked...a representation of reality from the

standpoint of women must draw on the variety of all women's experience" (Ibid., 386). By realizing the variety and transitory reality of women's subjectivities, personalities, and experiences, socialist feminists argued that any discussion of liberation from patriarchal oppression must always include an intersectional and contextual framework. A political movement that works towards women's rights, liberation, ethical reevaluation would necessarily need to be intersectional to effect structural change that did not empower white, privileged women at the expense of others who were outside such subjectivities. Jaggar argues that "socialist feminism [showed] that to reconstruct reality from the standpoint of women requires a far more total transformation of our society and of ourselves than is dreamt by a masculinist philosophy" (Ibid., 389). Queer theories adopted a similar stance towards the essentialist or identity-based arguments in that a more comprehensive and less biased or oppressive description of personhood was needed in order to work against all structures of oppression rather than dismantling some while reifying others.

Queer theories have inherited this socialist feminism's discussion of and commitment to intersectional analysis as a more adept means of understanding different subject's lived experiences through a rejection of essentialist and natural models of identity. Paralleled with discussions of nature and culture, essentialism supports arguments that describe qualities in natural terms. Postmodernist and especially queer discussions of identity have consequently argued against essentialism at the expense of natural understandings and terminology. Many more recent feminist theorists have exhaustively shown how this singular or essentialist model of identity is outdated and laden with privilege. Moreover Jagose argued that this identity politics critique "has occurred because, within poststructuralism, the very notion of identity as a

coherent and abiding sense of self is perceived as a cultural fantasy rather than a demonstrable fact” (Jagose 1994, 82). Paralleled with a discussion of intersectionality, queer theories have described the fantasy of social norms and normative identities. When lived subjects are compared to one another, the alignment of identities is textual at best. Lived experience and practice is infinitely multiple.

One strand of lesbian feminism, (the non-separatist strand) in contrast to gay and lesbian studies, provided important insights into the material and historical workings of sexuality. Lesbian feminists such as Adrienne Rich, Monique Wittig, Diana Fuss, the Radicalesbians and Rosemary Hennessy write on the workings of sexuality in terms of lesbian material life and subjectivity. Adrienne Rich’s “Compulsory Heterosexuality” identifies “the lie of compulsory female heterosexuality” and the ways in which a woman-identified or lesbian feminism can be liberation from this compulsory or normative erotic choice for female-bodied people (Abelove 1993, 61, 66). The Radicalesbian piece “The Woman-Identified Woman” theorizes that “in a society in which men do not oppress women, and sexual expression is allowed to follow feelings, the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality would disappear” (Radicalesbians 1970, 1). These lesbian feminist writings push the categories of sexuality away from an essentialist logic and towards a more critical acknowledgement of the different ways in which subjectivities are entrenched in regimes of power, patriarchy and dominance. These views were consistent with the growing resistance towards an identitarian logic grounded in gay and lesbian studies.

Rosemary Hennessy writes from a materialist perspective that “almost twenty years ago lesbian feminism in the West...called for a critique of heterosexuality” as

opposed to the more cultural tradition of focusing on the creation of a separatist, lesbian or homosexual identity (Jagose 1994, 93). Importantly for the later formation of queer theories, material feminists argued that “feminism, including discussions of lesbianism among cultural feminists, dealt with sexuality as a personal or civil rights issue in order to avoid a broader ranging materialist critique of the normative status of heterosexuality” (Ibid., 93). The creation of a separatist identity was culturally important because it formed an identity around which many people made claims upon the state for rights, respect and visibility. However this cultural strategy left in place the normative structures that made such a political strategy not only salient but also the only way through which people could be successful in gaining rights and recognition from the state. The materialist critique of heterosexuality’s privilege as the model of identity from which others descended was important in the queer shift away from essentialist strategies found within identity politics. Queer theories drew upon certain feminist critiques of compulsory heterosexuality and on the intersectional reality of sexuality with gender (and race, class...), and an institutional view of sexuality rather than the gay liberationist models of the autonomous liberal subject as a means of moving past normative structures and developing large structural critiques of sexuality and identity. These critiques were then instrumental within early writings on a “developing postmodern materialist queer theory” (Ibid. 93).

#### *Poststructuralism/Postmodernism*

Within gay and lesbian studies, many writers drew upon Michel Foucault’s work within a postmodernist framework to formulate alternative readings of sexuality, power and the production of knowledge. Foucault’s immensely important *History of*

*Sexuality*, first published in 1978, allowed a reading of sexuality where “desires are not preexisting biological entities, but rather, that they are constituted in the course of historically specific social practices” (Rubin 1984, 10). This way of describing sexuality moved away from natural modes of existence to seemingly more complex, cultural inscriptions of sexuality on the (natural) body. Moreover, Foucault “emphasized the generative aspects of the social organization of sex rather than its repressive elements by pointing out that new sexualities are constantly produced” (Ibid., 10). It is important to note the generative aspect of sexuality here is not the natural body but rather the subject’s experiences of culture that governed what was pleasurable and consequently desirable. The body for Foucault, as set up by his earlier work on the medical gaze in *Birth of the Clinic*, acted as a site of cultural inscription—all culture, no nature. Understandings of sexuality, then, must be understood through the workings of pleasure as productive of alternative practices, experiences and identities that were discursively produced through a cultural framework.

The poststructuralist theories and continued deconstruction of language provided a critical foundation for many queer theories that critiqued the normative power of language and sexuality. The parallels between Jacques Derrida’s and Foucault’s writings on social power, the privilege of language and the discursive became immensely important to queer critique. Specifically, Derrida’s discussion of language provided the foundation for different queer theories that attempted to draw upon Foucauldian analysis of power, pleasure, and subjectivity. Riki Wilchins in *Queer Theory, Gender Theory* (2004) centers Derrida’s announcement of the end of modernism and the beginning of postmodernism as the groundwork that allowed queer theory

and Foucauldian thinking to emerge after the 1960s. In her reading of Derrida “gender is a *language, a system of meanings and symbols, along with the rules, privileges, and punishments pertaining to their use—for power and sexuality (masculinity and femininity, strength and vulnerability, action and passivity, dominance and weakness)*” (Wilkins 2004, 35). She continues that “it is not just language that tends to make space for some things while excluding others. It is that words and meaning actually work because of a process of exclusion” (Ibid., 36). Derrida’s treatment of language leads into questions and critiques of the real as first posed by Jacques Lacan as a foil to the cultural symbolic. Wilkins contends that “it is precisely this suffering that makes it so important for us to explore the constructedness of gender and its political effects on women. Derrida’s constructedness is not opposed to reality. Rather, it is an attack on the very idea of Real” (Ibid., 44). It is this aspect of language’s power of exclusion and discursive privilege to construct knowledge as real and natural which is identified by many queer theorists as the root of sexist, racist and homophobic oppression.

Derrida’s ideas surrounding constructedness and *différance* as categories of engagement with textual and discursive power were of critical salience within queer theory. For Example Nikki Sullivan opens her *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (2003) with a chapter titled “The Social Construction of Same-Sex Desire: Sin, Crime, Sickness.” Her opening line asserts “I want to begin with the suggestion that sexuality is not natural, but rather, is discursively constructed. Moreover, sexuality, as we shall see, is constructed, experienced, and understood in culturally and historically specific ways” (Sullivan 2003, 1). She foregrounds the assumption of a nature/culture divide by dismissing any natural explanations of sexuality and upholding the cultural assertion that sexuality is understood only through discursive and cultural

experiences. Later in the book she argues that “to acknowledge the constructedness of meaning and identity” as discursive is one of the foundational moves of queer theory (Ibid., 52). It is Foucault who goes on to describe the workings of power and its relationship with the social body, but Derrida’s notions of textual construction and language provided postmodernism’s first steps towards a full discursive critique of sexuality and its historical epistemologies.

Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* presented a discursive analysis of sexuality that provided a means of social critique and historical specificity disallowed by the essentialist understanding of sexuality. Foucault notes of the homosexual that “nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him” (Foucault 1990, 43). The ‘homosexual’ as a subject was constructed such that his sexuality was a part of everything on and within him. Working with post-enlightenment models of scientific research and objectivity, Foucault argues that (white, male) researchers constructed the homosexual through a sexuality that was “written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature” (Ibid. 43). With the shift from the ‘habitual sin’ that sodomy had taken before to this discursive construction, came an entire social and scientific construction of the homosexual identity and body. The discursive reality of homosexual identity allowed for material explanations of perverse sexuality to permeate as cultural and natural formations of subjectivity. Foucault notes in addition to homosexuality, many other perversions were subjected to the same transformation. He argues that “the sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” bringing forth the opportunity for queer theorists and poststructuralist

writing to point to the many ways in which epistemological genealogies constrain this sort of subjective construction (Ibid., 43).

Gayle Rubin uses this reading of sexuality in her 1984 piece “Thinking Sex” argue against “sexual essentialism” in favor of a more workable understanding of being socially, discursively, and historically constructed (Rubin 10). Rubin argues that sex acts should not be judged on a normative hierarchy of sexual behavior, pleasure, or content but by the consent and pleasure of individuals involved. A sexual essentialism, for Rubin, extends from gay and lesbian (identity) politics in that certain formations of sexual partners, families, and activities are valued above others. This form of sexual privilege then is dissident with the radical sexual politics Rubin urges in “Thinking Sex.” Sexual essentialism is theoretically and politically aligned with identity politics as the justification for inclusion of those people who are sexually palatable, namely homonormative gay and lesbians. Queer or deviant sexual practice and the people who perform acts outside the norm become identified as socially and sexually perverted based on the construction of their desires and pleasure which become labeled as pathological and indecent. Essentialism in this formation does not only act as a theoretical apparatus to support natural arguments but also as a means of justifying and/or maintaining both social norms and political goals.

While not directly dismantling or deconstructing gay/lesbian sexualities, Rubin’s argument against sexual essentialism moves towards a more inclusive and less repressive logic not seen before in gay and lesbian writing. With this definition of essentialism in mind, Rubin calls for a new sexual morality that “should judge sex acts by the way partners treat one another, the level of mutual consideration, the presence or absence of coercion, and the quantity and quality of the pleasures they provide.

Whether sex acts are gay or straight, coupled or in groups, naked or in underwear, commercial or free, with or without video, should not be ethical concerns” (Rubin 15). This treatise was (and, in my argument, still is) a radical call for the change in the ways that straight and gay/lesbian society viewed sexuality in general. Moreover, Rubin’s work sets the stage for a larger critique of sexual normativity—the two main examples being heteronormativity (Warner 1991) and homonormativity (Duggan 1994). Rubin’s work illuminates the strictures placed on the construction of gay and lesbian identities and activities reflected in identity politics. These rigid or inflexible identities become ethical formations that delimit what can be considered good gay and lesbian activity/identity, which leads to the creation of social hierarchies that privilege certain behavior over others. This critique of identity politics was one of the leading charges that paved the way for later queer work on subjectivity, sexuality, pleasure, and identity.

### *Queer Theories/Activisms*

It seems standard to start an introduction to queer theories or anything queer-related with a discussion of the word ‘queer’ in its multiple, ebullient, and ephemeral definitions. Chris Berry and Jagose have defined ‘queer’ as “an ongoing and necessarily unfixed site of engagement and contestation” (Jagose and Berry 1996, 11). In her book entitled *Queer Theory*, Jagose makes a lengthier attempt: “Queer itself can have neither a fundamental logic, nor a consistent set of characteristics...Queer’s ambiguity is often cited as the reason for its mobilization” (Jagose 1994, 96). Abelove remarks that figuring “just what ‘queer’ signifies or includes or refers to is by no means easy to say” (Abelove 1993, 20). Hennessy argues that “Queer is widely

perceived as calling into question conventional understandings of sexual identity by deconstructing the categories, oppositions, and equations that sustain them” (paraphrased in Jagose 1994, 97). Halperin remarks more generally that “queer is by definition *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant... [Queer] describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot be in principle be delimited in advance” (Halperin 1995, 62). What these authors convey is a sense of infinitude and uncertainty in defining ‘queer.’ The common thread or center that these attempts at definition convey are multiple theoretical, political, practical and/or social contentions with the normative or socially privileged categories of identity/subjectivity.

The possibility for a queer academic turn was furthered by an increased political resistance to mainstream identity politics found within queer activism. Political activism surrounding sexuality coalesced around HIV/AIDS in the form up ACT-UP and queerness by queer nation. The 1990’s were a time at which two social impulses ran against each other full force. The “preference for ‘queer’ represents...an aggressive impulse of generalization; it rejects a minoritizing logic of toleration or simple political interest” and a general backing away from the gay and lesbian identity politics of the previous decades (Warner 1990, xxvi). Queer theories positioned themselves in academia as a ‘radical’ critique of the liberal, sexual subject. Queer activism stood in opposition to early gay and lesbian rights discourse due to its minoritizing and assimilationist logic. Queer activism’s widespread critiques of identity politics figured this rights-based logic as a clear acceptance of the liberal paradigm concerning freedom, identity, ‘natural’ sexuality, and liberation/liberty. While it cannot be said that there is an easy relationship between theory and politics,

it is noteworthy to point out the coincidence of the theoretical work of many queer theorists at the time, such as Warner, Berlant, Freeman, and Sedgwick, and their activism in *Queer Nation* and *ACT-UP*, for example.

Queer theories have reached numerous impasses and intersections in their tumultuous history only to become a stronger academic tool through their many theoretical battles. “Queer theory” was officially coined by Teresea de Lauretis in the 1990 special issue of *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* that she guest edited but quickly disavowed the term (labeling it ‘a vacuous creature of the publishing industry’ in 1994 (de Lauretis 1994: 316). When first academically conceptualized in the 1990s, queer theory stood with only a few previous texts where “the energies of queer studies [had] come more from rethinking the subjective meaning of sexuality than from rethinking the social” (Warner 1990 xi). However it is important to note queer theory’s relationship to early gay liberation, lesbian feminism and other bodies of knowledge. Similarly found in many gay liberation manifestos, Warner offers “that many insights and aspirations now associated with queer theory have long histories—including self-conscious dialogue among lesbians as well as between lesbians and gay men about their multiple differences” (Ibid., xi). In its earliest formation, queer theory’s project is one of contra-binaries/social normativities and exposing seemingly invisible systems of privilege and oppression. Queer theories look to social practice and power to understand the ways in which subjects are organized and socially pressured into different ways of thinking, feeling, and desiring.

The important aspects of queer theory in this early formulation would be the interrogation of the subject, as Monique Wittig described, and its interaction with the determining heterosexual matrix. Moreover, the insistence that any and all paradigms

of normativity were forms of oppression and violence was central to queer theory's early formation. For example, Eve Sedgwick in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) notes "it is a rather amazing fact that, of the many dimensions along which the genital activity of one person can be differentiated from that of another...precisely one, the gender of object choice, emerged from the turn of the century, and has remained, as *the* dimension denoted by the now ubiquitous category of 'sexual orientation'" (Sedgwick 1990, 8). For queer theory, the subject no longer could stand as an individual with innate or essential properties. As Sue-Ellen Case writes that a queer critique "constitute a kind of activism that attacks the dominant notion of the natural" (Case 1991, 3). The subject is only formulated through its interaction and subsequent recognition within the cultural symbolic rather than through its natural beginnings.

Queer as a term went through many different contestations between one of action, *doing*, and one of description, *being*. Lisa Duggan argues queer theory does not reformulate queer to stand in as the newest moniker for subversive identity but rather "the promise of new meanings, new ways of thinking and acting politically – a promise sometimes realized, sometimes not" (Duggan 1994, 11). In this sense 'queer' acts as a form of being and doing, however Duggan is quick to add that this utopian ideal is not always the case. Sullivan notes that "queer is not an essential identity, it is nevertheless...a provisional political one" (Sullivan 2004, 44). For Case, queer theory works "at the site of ontology, to shift the ground of being itself, thus challenging the Platonic parameters of Being – the borders of life and death" (Abelove 1993, 206). Queer, in this sense, is material in its theoretical formations. This self-reflexive tendency of queer to include more and consider more is an important aspect of the humanism within queer theories. The shifting of borders acts as a sort of renewal,

increasing the range of subjects considered in a queer parameter. However, what remains limited is the humanist context through which certain subjects can be considered. Queer acts and queer representations are perceived with sado-humanist terms, which leads the further proliferation of a human contingency as the basis of theoretical engagement.

Queer theories in their multiple formations as forms of resistance act as an intersectional critique and disassembly of the hierarchal structures that maintain social and normative privilege. Queer, with some of its roots in political activism of the early 90s, takes on a larger impulse towards a political practice, a provisional solution that theoretical work tends to have. Furthered in theoretical terms, Janet Jakobsen argues that queer works to “complete the Foucauldian move from human being to human undoing” and the result is queer as a verb (Jakobsen 1998, 516). Queer theory as it was formulated within the early 1990s brought with it the activist commitments of many academic writers who were themselves involved in political action. Michael Warner who was heavily involved in Queer Nation and ACT-UP political actions adopted a similar vernacular when he proffered that queer is a protest against “the idea of normal behavior” (Warner 1990, 290). Either in terms of being/doing or both, queer acts as a stance against any kind of normative behavior or identity as fixed, stable, privileged and natural. Queer theorizing and activism stands in contrast to the earlier, normative formations of gay and lesbian identity politics while maintaining a basis of sado-humanism despite interpreting itself as against hierarchal models of power and normativities.

The response to the early queer writings and politics in the 90s produced important critiques and insights that questioned the naturalized and binary conditions

of subjectivity. Seemingly natural binaries such as man/woman, homo/heterosexual, adult/child, and others were questioned for their oppressive normative and social power. Using Foucault's history of sexuality, Judith Butler illuminated the ways in which heterosexuality constructs an 'other', the homosexual, as the object to its own social definition. Within heterosexuality's discursive construction onto the body, this binary becomes naturalized with the homosexual 'other' as lesser/unworthy or pathologized. This construction is obstructed in the heterosexual matrix as a means of consolidating power with the normal.<sup>2</sup> Butler argues that "The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of 'identities' cannot 'exist'—that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not 'follow' from either sex or gender" (Butler 1990, 17). Heterosexuality's normative power depends at once upon its relationship to and social disavowal of homosexuality and its erasure of their constructedness.

As this genealogy demonstrates, early queer theory's discussion of subjectivity stood in contrast with lesbian and gay identity politics. The queer impulse to critique normative gay identities created a dichotomy between queer theory's constructivist model and lesbian and gay politics' essentialist model. Donald Hall characterizes this binary as a struggle between different aspects of "identity": its reality and its fictionality" (Hall 1994 46). This binary reinforced the nature/culture divide in queer studies. Queer theories urged a complete shift in ontology, throwing away the natural for the discursive. Gay and lesbian studies maintained that embodiment and biology

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<sup>2</sup> Additionally it should be noted that Butler draws a more communitarian and relational understanding of subjectivity from her earlier work on Hegel. This philosophical commitment and history underpins her formulations of subjectivity, performativity, and communication within her queer theory.

were the important markers and determining factors of identity. Each theory was driven by competing political impulses. Queer theories and lesbian and gay theory cannot be called divergent and oppositional in the strictest sense. This conception is partly due to gay liberalism's academic dry-spell since the inception of queer theory, but more importantly, to the fact that neither field directly engaged in any sort of academic conversation. The debate has taken place not as debate but queer critique of gay and lesbian identity politics. Queer theories cast a very specific definition for gay and lesbian studies in terms of subjectivity, identity, and politics.

This line of critique reveals an important part of the history of theories concerning subjectivity; queer theory emphasizes as its model a discursive subjectivity and disavows an essentialized sexuality written in gay and lesbian studies. Eve Sedgwick, however, suggests that rather than seeing this struggle as between constructivists versus essentialists we should instead explore the idea of “‘minoritizing’ versus ‘universalizing’” as an “*alternative* (though not equivalent)” (Sedgwick 1990 40). She continues that she is “very dubious about the ability of even the most scrupulously gay-affirmative thinkers to divorce these terms [‘essentialist/constructivist’], especially as they relate to the question of ontogeny from the essentially gay-genocidal nexuses through which they have developed” (Ibid., 40-1). For Sedgwick, gay-affirmative thinking is done well only when it does not attempt an ontogeny of sexuality that is based upon this ‘origin’ account based in essentialized understandings of sexuality in individuals.

The universalizing logic is, for Sedgwick, characteristic of work that takes as its starting point a Foucauldian and postmodernist approach to historical and social specific of certain sexual practices/choices as sexualities. It is evident that a

minoritizing view of sexuality and subjectivity assumes a pre-existing, liberal subject while queer theories' view assumes an identifiably human subject (at least a subject that can relate and respond within a human symbolic). This binary stands in better for the two fields' politicized practices because it moves away from the understandings of 'all culture no nature' in queer theory and 'no culture all nature' of gay-affirmative thinking that constructs a very rigid binary between the two. While this type of thinking is common in reactionary writing towards queer theory (Myra Hird has gone on record saying she has "critiqued queer theory for what [she] saw as an implicit assumption that queer is constituted through the domain of culture" [Giffney 2009]), I argue this type of critique is unconstructive in larger discussions of nature and culture. Sedgwick's alternative offers a means to think through both sides' logic as an impulse towards certain commitments rather than implicit understandings or arguments. It is, however, important to note that Sedgwick is committed to specific political practice within queer theory and critique, so my discussion of minoritizing and universalizing as descriptors must be tempered by this understanding.

Butler begins her own undoing of identity politics and essentialism through a queer critique of the ways in which bodies and subjectivity are produced and understood. She argues it follows that a politics built around identities as natural entities rather than normative fictions is self-defeating (as an example Butler argues feminism's use of "woman" is an example of this unfortunate process). Butler offered her theory of performativity as a means of understanding the socialization of the subject in culturally recognizable and identity. This performatively produced identity is dependent on its reiterative temporal practice. Butler argues,

...performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate 'act,' but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produced the effects that it names...the regulatory norms of 'sex' work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative...(Butler 1993, 2).

For any subjectivity to be culturally recognizable and appear natural it must materialize in this discursive context. In terms of subjectivity, queer theory attempts to keep in mind "the understanding of performativity not as the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but rather, as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains" (Ibid., 2). Butler is careful to keep the focus of performativity on the discursive process by which certain bodies come to matter. Committed to a widespread critique of natural models of sexuality and identity, the theory of performativity maintains a linguistic requirement as the means through which certain identities are not only performed but witnessed, interpreted and understood. It is within this cultural and discursive context that the humanism is smuggled into queer theories that rely on these necessarily linguistic models of subjectivity.

The theory of performativity was instrumental to the illumination of heterosexuality's means of naturalization and power over homosexuality. Queer theories have argued that the "body is [one's] being-in-the-world and as such is the instrument through which identity is performatively generated. It is in virtue of having/being a body that is discursively produced in and through its relation to culture, that I am an 'I'"(Sullivan 2003, 41-2). This means of theorizing retains a culture-subject dynamic that is rooted in a discursively constructed relation. The 'I' that I am, is only recognizable in that there is someone else to say that 'I am' to, with

a resounding 'you are' in response. The call and response of performativity is contained within the figure of the witness in relation to the subject. Moreover, Butler contends that within queer theory's attempts to reformulate the materiality of the body that "the recasting of the matter of bodies as the effect of a dynamic of power, such that the matter of bodies will be indissociable from the regulatory norms that govern their materialization and the signification of those material effects" (Butler 1993, 2). Butler rhetorically constructs a very specific type of body within a humanist context where the regulatory norms are negotiated within the relation between the performatively produced subject and the witness. Most importantly, performatively produced matter and subjects are never done in silence or alone.

It is the context of sex that Butler argues for a theory of matter that maintains a merely discursive reality and a strict sado-humanist foundation. Following from her rethinking of materiality, Butler proffers one her most powerful arguments in early queer theory: "the construal of 'sex' no longer as a bodily given on which the construct of gender is artificially imposed, but as a cultural norm which governs the materialization of bodies" (Ibid., 3). Queer theory's project, Butler argues, is a re-politicization of "abjection" into political efficacy and a "demanding resignification" (à la Nancy Fraser) rather than a historical term of oppression used against homosexual and 'abject' bodies. Through this project "queer lives become legible...without fixing the terms of that recognition in yet another conceptual order of lifelessness and rigid exclusion...toward a more possible future to expand the very meaning of what count as a valued and valuable body in the world" (Ibid., 21). Butler continually sets up her theory as one that allows for the demands of the subject to be heard once again through queer theory's larger political project. The project of

expanding what counts as a legible and valued body, while commendable, is done at the expense of animal others and silent others who cannot make claims upon the witness or observer let alone demand resignification. The terms of Butler's engagement with bodies are fixed upon human bodies. This strict definition of what counts as a body that can make claims on 'the witness' leads to the further inheritance of humanism within queer theories that adopt Butler's theory in *Bodies that Matter*. While Butler would say that all bodies can come to matter through this demand for the expansion of (what counts as) a visible and valued body, her theory requires that this demand for change be made not by another but by the lived, linguistic subject. This linguistic prerequisite is where the humanism is maintained even if animals were to be understood through this theory. For a subject to be performatively produced and come to matter, the initial call must be made and animals lacking the ability to make that linguistic intervention will always be left out or 'spoken for' in a sado-humanist register.

#### *The Self-Defeating Logic and Sado-Humanism Within Queer Theories*

There is a self-defeating logic contained in queer theories. In its early construction queer theory touted itself as that which is constantly changing in order to adapt to new social constructions which place normative pressures on different peoples. Later queer theories, in this understanding, are always against any and all social norms, limiting binaries and oppressive discourses. However, queer theories maintain a humanistic and anthropocentric model of subjectivity that excludes and reiterates the social binary of human/animal. Despite maintaining a logic of contra-normativity, queer theories constantly reify the human/animal divide, privileging

human sentience over all over qualities, abilities, and traits. By constantly reifying the salience of language in queer theory, a relational and discursive subject remains at the core of queer thought. This subject is not necessarily the essentialized subject of previous gay liberation discourse but it is a subject caught within a system of textual descriptions and discursive pleasure/pain. For example, Gayle Rubin's radical theory of sexuality is based in the ability of dialogue with the subject in terms of pleasure, coercion, enjoyment and satisfaction. The questions "Is that good? Do you enjoy that?" are necessarily linguistic. A symbolic based on discursive questions and textual limits disavows the animal as unintelligible and necessarily unimportant for its inability to take part in human discursive structures. Despite queer theories having gone on record many times to assert their posthumanist nature (McCormack in Giffney 2009), there seems to be nothing more human than this sort of posthumanism. At their core, sado-humanist queer theories necessarily disavow the animal in its discursive goals into a binary between the human/the animal, the subject/the other that leads to the violent invisibility of animal lives, experiences, and pain or construal of the animal as object and instrument constructed for human domination.

These queer theories left intact a relational (and humanistic) discursive subject. This argument is not to say these theories were wrong or not important *for their own sado-humanist purpose*. On the contrary, at a time when queer people were trying to gain social recognition and cultural legitimacy, these theories were desperately important in the academic and political fight for power and presence. My exposure of this implicit binary between human/animal is an attempt to understand the ways in which this binary has been constructed and proliferated through a very large number of

sado-humanist queer theories. This genealogy attempts to understand the historical commitments, epistemologies, and politics that have shaped queer theories in hopes of applying some of the important insights of power, norms, and oppression to the lives and subjectivities to non-human others and expanding the realm of consideration beyond the human/animal divide through a complete overhaul, reworking, and eventual rejection of sado-humanist queer theories.

For the purpose of my thesis I want to rethink and question the centrality of an intact, linguistic, and relational subject that must be recognized and interacted with as such. The theory of performatively produced identities relies on the humanistic and relational model where others are present to witness the release of the subject into the cultural symbolic. The Foucauldian explanation of power and the social body is wrapped up within discussions of the necessarily human body. Ideas of abjection, repression and discipline are discussed in terms of human will, historical (human) society, and discursive construction. I argue that Foucault's claim that at the turn of the century the homosexual became a "species" is one of the key bases that formulated this binary between human/animal (Foucault 1990, 44). By shining a theoretical and critical light upon the discursive construction of homosexuality contra heterosexuality, the non human others, the other species, were left in abjection as each perverse sexuality was reintegrated into queer theory's critical realm.

The question "why do animals matter to queer theories?" cannot be answered in terms of sado-humanist queer theories. While these theories may work for (some) human subjects, they are unable to account for the more in/nonhuman becomings, forces, and matter of other subjects. If queer theory is really going to be queer, then the exposure of this self-defeating logic must signal a change in queer theories

themselves. If one is really going to maintain a commitment queer subjectivity and life, then one has to take into account animal others in one's perception and construction of the world as a queer person. A genealogical inquiry and complete ontological shift is necessary for non-human others to matter within queer theories. Butler's assertion that the body is our 'being in the world' is limited to a human body at its core. Animals are caught in the crossfire between debates of nature/culture, leaving animals woefully dressed in human discourse and painful constructs within queer theories. Without a non-linguistic, nonorganic, antihuman and inhuman description of desire, force, becoming, subjectivity and self, the nonhuman animal in this schema is relegated to the position of animated object. The process I am calling for is then a questioning of how we construct theory in the first place: a queering of the queer (theory). By attending to the tendency of queer theories to assume a human linguistic subject and then proceed, we will be able to formulate a new means of theorizing that gives way to a more productive relationship between queer and animal studies. The entanglement between queer and lesbian/gay theories provides a backdrop on which these different modes of subjectivity can come together in new and interesting ways. Moreover, an engagement with feminist animal studies as a logic that does not start with the human at its very core can provide a means to create animal-attentive queer theories that move beyond a sado-humanist and self-defeating construction.

## **Chapter 2: On the Problem of ‘Speaking For’ Animal Others**

The practical and theoretical problems of ‘living with’, ‘speaking with’, ‘speaking for’, and ‘recognizing’ others has remained a central concern for many disciplines and activist communities. Disability studies, queer theories, ecofeminism, and animal studies scholars have written on the many ways that ‘the other’ is engaged with and spoken for in its abject positioning to at once define and support the existence of the powerful through its othering and instrumentality. In the previous chapter, the genealogy of gay liberation to queer theories illuminated the many ways that communities have found voice and been moved to action. Moving from the 1960s into the 1990s queer struggles have in many ways dealt with questions of ‘speaking for’ the desires of themselves and others. Queer subjectivity and experience is always abject within heteronormative society as a symbolic foil against which the privilege of heterosexual experience and practice can be recognized. Queerness must be the pathologized and constantly disavowed other to serve as the definition of what heterosexuality is *not*. In a similar move the humanism within theories of subjectivity necessarily disavows animal life and experience as a means of definition and control. Human dominance is argued through the figure of nature as teleology for the existence of such a hierarchy that situates human experience, mindedness, intellect, and cultural formation at the top. Animal studies has offered a widespread literary and ethical critique of the ways in which sado-humanism remains central to discussions of subjectivity, experience, embodiment, and civil rights. Mirroring my previous discussions of various queer critiques against heteronormativity, I will describe the ways in which writings concerned with valuing animal experience,

subjectivity, and representations have critiqued and offered models outside of sado-humanist discourse and practice.

The many ways that humans speak for animal others can be readily observed in practically every facet of life. Within a human dominated, colonized, and symbolic world the potential for violence is imminent when the rules of engagement are not translated, understood, or even perceived. In both ethically justified and unjustified ways, animal others are spoken for/with in a world built upon the premises of sado-humanism. ‘Roadkill’ stands as a testament to this very fact. The dead bodies of animal others are littered along the sides of our human made roads as a consequence of building them through previously uninterrupted ecosystems. While it can be easily conveyed to an able-bodied, linguistic or symbolically inclined human child that ‘cars are dangerous’ through words or actions, the same process cannot be done with many animal others for obvious reasons. The practical and symbolic issue of ‘roadkill’ calls our attention to the necessity to ‘live with’ or at least ‘speak for’ in some attempt to alleviate the large numbers of animals killed in an unintelligibly human world.

In this chapter I will attempt to show the different ways in which the field of animal studies has come together to address a diverse range of topics, disciplines, and scholarly inquiries on animality, ‘the animal’, and nonhuman animals with a specific attention to ‘speaking for’ and ‘living with’ or relating to animal others. Through different epistemological and disciplinary inheritances, queer theories postmodernly stand with a sado-humanist slant at its core. As Lori Gruen has noted “the attitudes evoked by and the practices that emerge from and support [sado-humanism]<sup>3</sup> are

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<sup>3</sup> Gruen names these forces “Speciesism”, “humanormativity”, “human exceptionalism” – but I will follow Zipporah Weisberg and call these “sado-humanism”. Deriving sado- from sadism, Weisberg

increasingly viewed to be unjustifiably prejudicial and oppressive, but [it is] also at the very core of scholarship in virtually every field in the ‘humanities’” (Gruen 2011, 1).

Nonhuman companions, animals, and others are left in stark contrast to the humans of concern who are within the purview of queer theories. When asked “Why should queer theory care about animals?” by a queer studies professor, I found it impossible to answer using queer theory’s own discourse, vocabulary, and structure.

Appropriating a famous black feminist phrase, using queer theory’s own theoretical tools will never bring its anthropocentric and sado-humanist hierarchy crashing down.

Underlying the question of ‘speaking for’ is a larger question of ethics. Within this chapter, the ethical discussions specifically focus on two ethical turns: critiquing the ethics of representation and formulating a practical ethics. While it can be said that the writings deal with both of these ethical areas simultaneously, it is important to make a distinction between the two. For the purposes of this thesis I must delineate between an ethics of representation and an ethics of practice within the writings and theories discussed in order to show both the ways in which they interact and also the ways in which they fail to interact. This distinction allows for a fuller understanding of the differences between a shifting ontology and a shifting practice. While it can be said that the two are interrelated for very obvious reasons, it cannot necessarily be argued that a shift in one mirrors a shift in the other. A better argument would be that

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quotes Haraway in that “Sadism produces the self as a fetish, an endlessly repetitive project. Sadism is a shadow twin to modern humanism” (Haraway in Weisberg 2009, 23). Through a continuous process of self-reflection and self-reproduction, humanism and sadism combine in the pain-filled disavowal of animals in what Weisberg terms sado-humanism in support of a coherent and bounded ‘Human’ identity.

a shift in ontology demands a shift in practice and vice versa. An understanding of what is to be done is predicated on the basis of what is being done currently, the actors involved, and the stakes of making political claims that call for change in the first place. Specifically, much of the writing in animal studies deals with the ethics of representation while failing to extend an argument towards the more practical implications of such an ethical argument. While the politics and practices of ‘speaking for’ others involve a critical discussion on the ethics of representation that, within animal studies, calls for a radical shift in ontology, such a shift cannot take hold or matter beyond a (material-)discursive posturing unless it is grounded within a clear and identifiable practical ethics.

This discussion of animal studies, representations, ethics and its academic kin will begin to set up a later investigation of the assemblages and amalgamations formed by the possible bringing together of seeming disparate fields, commitments, and questions. First I will touch upon the roots of animal ethics and the animal liberation movement through the work of specific authors and practical examples. Next I move to describe the ways in which a feminist care ethic has emerged in part as a rejection of the assumptions of the mainstream animal liberation movement’s ideology and has instead been concerned with the problem of ‘living with’ and specifically caring for animal others. I will then attempt not to summarize but articulate important writings and arguments that touch upon the problem of ‘speaking for’ the other that falls under the umbrella of animal studies. Next I will move to the writing of Donna Haraway, who has deeply influenced the field of animal studies and discussions and the ethics of ‘living with’ and ‘speaking for’ animal others. Finally I will articulate some critiques/affirmative readings and qualifications of previous works I discuss in

order to come into a politics of animal liberation rethought through a multicultural ethics in an attempt to contribute to a larger discussion of ethically ‘speaking for’ others, living/engaging with others, and abolishing sado-humanist theorizing and practices. At the end of the chapter I offer alternative ways of thinking, practicing, and theorizing that begin to alleviate the tensions between these two ethics and begin to move towards animal-attentive queer theories.

### *Animal Rights and Liberation*

In techno-capitalist culture, the figure of human/animal relations is found everywhere within consumption, commerce, research, and production. A classic example would be the very long history of the use of animals within research science. Animals act as model organisms that are understood as usable and disposable systems in which researchers can act out their own scholarly research in hopes of extending their conclusions to human biology. Recently animal deaths have been figured as ‘sacrifices,’ attributing not only a productive reality to each animal death but also an apologetic attempt by researchers to justify the often torturous lives of animal research subjects. Evolutionary homology acts as a means of moving biochemically from *in vitro*, outside any living system, to *in vivo*, within the biological system (model organism) itself, consequently causing no human harm in the process. Multitudes of transgenic, objectified, and modified animals are subjected to the scientific inquiries of different research groups: Does our seizure drug work in our model rats? What is the level of lethality? What are the biological benefits of our drug? Animals that have been genetically modified (transgenic) are coded to perform/produce the human medical diseases researches wish to understand and cure without harming a human in the

process (e.g. Oncomouse). Instead, animal sacrifice is figured through a speciesist framework as an acceptable alternative to harming human beings. Animals serve as the object of information from which researchers extract data and eventually are, in all likelihood, killed and disposed of. Animals' deaths become the invisible numbers behind headings published in *Nature*, *Cell*, and *Scientific American*: "New Drug for..."

A common methodology in animal liberation theory and discourse is to understand the ways in which nonhuman animal are like humans or share the moral qualities of life and therefore extend rights and consideration to them on the basis of this sameness. Tom Regan has argued that "Inherent value is the value that individuals possess independent of their goodness of usefulness to others, and rights are the things that protect this value. All subjects-of-a-life have such value" (Gruen 1993, 78). For Regan then the question of what has life or is a subject-of-a-life is central to extending rights based on this inherent value. It can then be argued that "only self-conscious beings, capable of having beliefs and desires, only deliberate actors who have a conception of the future, are subjects-of-a-life. In addition, all beings who have inherent value have it equally" (Gruen 1993, 78). Inherent value is not based upon the actions or history of the subject but merely given based on the fact that they have life or are subjects-of-a-life. Within such a scheme it can be said that the bear who deliberately makes a den here and not there in order to effectively hunt others and raise and protect cubs, and the human who decides which college to attend are both subjects-of-a-life, inherently valued, and should be given equal rights/protections accordingly. This model of equal rights based on sameness does not mean that both the student and bear should equally be allowed to go to college but

rather that each are valued in their experiences as subjects-of-a-life. The argument of sameness does not mean that everything should be valued as human but rather that, in my example, bear-experience should have inherent value in its similarity rather than as a distinct and unvalued other.

Another common practice within animal liberation theory and discourse is to extend what is considered a life based upon the ability to feel pleasure/pain or suffer. Peter Singer argues that a principle of equal consideration purports that “all beings who are capable of feeling pain and pleasure are subjects of moral consideration” (Gruen 1993, 78). In determining what is the right action to take, Singer, motivated by a utilitarian philosophical tradition, argues “right actions are actions that maximize pleasure and minimize pain” (Gruen 1993, 78). Within this vein of ethical thinking, our calculations of what can be considered right and wrong must include those who feel pain regardless of their species affiliation. To exclude non-human animals, those who are not members of our species, from our considerations/deliberations of what is right or the right action to take we are necessarily being speciesist or caught within “a bias in favor of one’s own species and is considered morally on par with sexism and racism” (Gruen 1993, 78). Singer’s (as well as Regan’s) appeal for extending rights and protection to others who feel pain and pleasure, are capable of suffering, “is demanded by reason, not emotion” (qtd. in Gruen 1993, 79). Gruen argues that, while it is certainly powerful to make a purely rational argument in some cases, “the emotional force of kinship or closeness to another is a crucial element in thinking about moral deliberations” (Gruen 1993, 79). To demand that someone consider the pain of someone they love versus an unseen cow would not only be practically difficult but also emotionally unfeasible. For an animal liberation framework to be successful,

it needs to include a clearer picture of the pains, pleasures, and subjects-of-a-life in question but also a more in depth understanding of the deliberator's reality in order to overcome the practical snags that many animal rights arguments experience in practice.

It should be noted however that these sort of animal rights arguments discursively collapse the diversity of nonhuman animal experience constructing a sort of vertical hierarchy with humans on the top while nonhuman animals fill in the spaces below. This argument may be powerful for the closely related primates: for example, Spain's extension of human rights to the great apes. However the argument collapses when humans are asked to accept that chickens have a human 'likeness', when in fact they possess complex cultural practices very much different from the ways in which human culture functions. As Wolfe points out "the problem is that incoherence or vagueness serves to maintain a certain historically, ideologically, and intellectually specific form of subjectivity while masking it as pluralism—including (in this case) pluralism extended to nonhuman animals" (Wolfe 2009, 568). Arguments of sameness place the human squarely on top of a large diversity in an attempt to endow rights and moral consideration to some but not all animals by failing to divorce a human exceptionalism from the consideration of the spectrum of animal experience. Gruen has argued that this collapse is symptomatic of sado-humanism: "we define the human, human action, human mindedness, human morality, human creativity, human knowledge against the animal and just below the divine" (Gruen 2011, 1). By constructing this difference according to animal others, we necessarily elevate the human experience above all other experiences in a denial of the agencies and lives of others. Within each of these rights-models an underlying sado-humanist core is

maintained through both the necessary privileging of human as discursive deliberator but also the way in which human qualities mediate our understanding of all other animal experiences.

### *Feminist Care Ethics*

In an attempt to take account of and value arguments that fall outside of a strictly rational and masculinist animal ethics, feminist care ethics attempts to argue that value should be accorded to nonhuman animals in ways that leads us to attend to and care for the experience and lives of other animals. I want to articulate a form of feminist care ethics that remains extremely important in regard to the practical and theoretical treatment of nonhuman animal lives and experiences. Within an ecofeminist perspective the rationalist accounts of animal liberation ethics “perpetuate an unnecessary dichotomy between reason and emotion” (Gruen 1993, 79). Through a feminist care ethic we can begin to recognize the “emotional force of kinship or closeness to another [as] a crucial element in thinking about moral deliberations” (Gruen 1993, 79). Moving away from theories of masculinist abstraction to a more reality-based account of the world, a practical ethics should not only take into account whether or not an animal suffers or has life and give rights accordingly. Drawing on an ecofeminist perspective, “such a practice embraces a ‘methodological humility,’ a method of deep respect for difference” in order to bring attention to the misunderstandings and lapses that occur within a liberal sado-humanist framework. A feminist ethic-of-care takes into account the experiences, personalities, oppressions, specificities, and differences in the lives of human and animal others, as well as larger

intersectional critiques of the structures and hierarchies that produce such oppressions.

An important facet of animal consideration that should not be ignored is the way in which the treatment of nonhuman others is thought of and theorized in current academic and political practice. The care ethic within feminist practice draws from Carol Gilligan's work on a morality based on "sustaining connection...keeping the web of relationships intact" (qtd in Donovan 2007, 2). More generally, "the feminist care ethic thus has rejected abstract, rule-based principles in favor of situational, contextual ethics, allowing for a narrative understanding of the particulars of a situation or an issue" (Donovan 2007, 2). This form of practical ethics and contextual treatment is indicative of the feminist tradition from which this form of care ethics comes from. Importantly "the feminist ethic of care regards animals as individuals who do have feelings, who can communicate those feelings, and to whom therefore humans have moral obligations" (Donovan 2007, 2-3). It is important to note the use of the word 'individual' rather than say human or subject. In relating to others within a 'web' or given structure the relating is not necessarily done in humanist terms but rather they are negotiated within the relation itself. A care ethic does not demand a demand from the other individual but only recognition of their subjectivity in relation.

The use of the word 'individual' signals a specific form of community-based ethic. Animals are indeed individuals who should be given moral consideration in their specific situation to prevent abuse, suffering, and torturous death. Therefore, this theory is not one of equality but consideration, attention, and care. Importantly, "humans have a moral obligation to care for those animals who, for whatever reason,

are unable to adequately care for themselves, in accordance with their needs and wishes, as best the caregivers can ascertain them” (Donovan 2007, 4). In speaking for the other it is demanded through a feminist care ethic that those who are seen as unable to care for themselves demand that the able, care for and protect the others when possible. Moreover, the attention to the animal is a two-fold ethic: “attention to the individual suffering animal but also...attention to the political and economic systems that are causing the suffering. A feminist ethic-of-care approach to animal ethics offers a *political* analysis” (Donovan 2007, 3). Moving beyond an ethic that cares for or abolishes the suffering of animals, a feminist ethic-of-care expands a community of consideration in line with the practical politics of radical feminist approaches, in attempts to end animal suffering and effect intersectional, systemic change that initially produces the suffering and oppression.

This feminist ethic-of-care is motivated by an animal liberationist stance but moves beyond a pure liberationist stance towards a structural analysis that recognizes the ways in which humans matter and can invoke change. On the point of equality, “animals are not equal to humans; domestic animals in particular, are for the most part dependent on humans for survival—a situation require an ethic that recognizes this inequality” (Donovan 2007, 6). This point remains a critical intervention into sado-humanist thought. An anthropocentric and sado-humanist world should be rejected but the ways in which humans matter differently than other animals *in our current world* should not be forgotten. As Derrida argues “a war [is] being waged, the unequal forces of which could one day be reversed, between those who violate not only animal life but even and also this sentiment of compassion and, on the other hand those who appeal to an irrefutable testimony to this pity” (Derrida 2009, 397).

In this way the feminist care ethic is one of situational and contextual bases that attends to the needs and desires of nonhuman others in relation to humans.

The feminist care tradition is one in which an emotional appeal to the moral consideration of animals is valued as a means of coming into relation with ourselves and animal others and effecting the change demanded by such a newfound awareness. While it does not specifically address the problem of speaking for the other, the feminist care ethic necessarily begins to deal with the problem of living with and in relation to animal others. Gruen calls for a contextual vegetarianism as the political effects of empathetically engaging with animal others. She argues that “empathetic engagement with different others” is a form of moral attention that not only brings into focus the claims that non-humans make on us but also can help widen our moral attention (Gruen in Donovan 2007, 339). It is within this engagement an focus on others that we, as humans, give and take value based on our understanding of who deserves moral attention. When we attempt to empathetically engage with animal others “we begin to identify non-human animals as worthy of our moral attention because they are beings with whom we *can* empathize”—they have a perspective that we can take and avoid the projection of our moral perspective and desires onto them in domination (Gruen in Donovan 2007, 339. My emphasis). Importantly when we see animals as individuals with whom we can empathize “they can no longer be seen as food. They are creatures with whom we share a way of being in the world” (Gruen in Donovan 2007, 339). It is from this argument that Gruen argues that the demand for a moral vegetarianism comes from within this empathetic bond. The argument for vegetarianism must be contextual because within a socialist feminist critique we must keep in mind the shifting communities of consideration

where animals may be the only means of survival (a feminist ethic-of-care takes into the killing of animals in self-defense as the only justifiable means of killing others). Simply put: “If we desire to see the world better, to understand our reactions to particular situations, and to reflect on the meaning of those reactions, then we cannot help but accept contextual vegetarianism” (Gruen in Donovan 2007, 339).

Kelly Oliver argues for a new conceptualization of the relations that humans have had, maintain, and continue to have with the animal others around us and the ethical implications this attention brings to the forefront in our attempts to live/speak with and speak for the animal. She says that “on the conceptual level *the animal* is sacrificed for *man*, and on the literal level, animals are sacrificed for the sake of men” (Oliver 2009, 2). What then is contained within this sacrificial engagement? How is *man* able to sacrifice *the animal* and what does he learn from such a ritual? Oliver inverts the question and shows the ways in which the consideration must be self-reflexive. For a philosophy of alterity and a mere disavowal the human subject “repeats the very power structure of subject and object, of us versus them, of human versus animal, that the ethics of difference is purportedly working against or working through” (Oliver 2009, 5). Moreover, as less rigorously argued by Wolfe, “by uncovering the latent humanism in antihumanist texts, we continue to witness the ambivalence toward animalities and animals that has defined Western philosophy and culture” (Oliver 2009, 5). The denial of what Oliver calls animal pedagogy continues an ethic of separation from the material lives of animals and the ways in which they stand in relation to us—“teach [us] how to be human” (Oliver 2009, 21). This scholarly ambivalence is where the stacking of human above animal can occur in the literal and theoretical use of animals for human (masculinist) gain.

Oliver argues against this disavowal of the animal. She notes, “this animal pedagogy is not acknowledged. To acknowledge the dependence of *man* and *humanity* on *animal* and *animality* is to undermine man’s sense of himself as autonomous and self-sovereign” (Oliver 2009, 21). The politics of speaking for animals is paralleled by a larger political anxiety over the boundaries of what counts as citizen/subject and object. Who/What can be spoken about without being spoken to (based on the condition of whether or not it would respond)? A common theme within animal studies is the first step of removing man or human more generally from its precipice atop the hierarchy of worldly organisms. A vertical construction of domination serves as the means to man’s domination of the animal world. Oliver notes “our consideration of animals makes it more pressing than ever not to repeat exclusive gestures that justify our treatment of animals based on what we take to be salient about their nature or behavior” (Oliver 2009, 21). Without this hierarchy through the acknowledgement of human debt towards animal others acts as a means beginning a treatment not based on binary relations that invariably end in human domination.

Oliver then is concerned with the creation of a practical ethics that would examine responsivity and responsibility towards animal others. She explains that she is “interested in the *relationship* between the human and the animal, humans and animals” (Oliver 2009, 21). Moreover she argues that “we need to move from an ethics of sameness, through an ethics of difference, towards an ethics of *relationality* and *responsivity*. Animal ethics requires rethinking identity and difference, by focusing on relationships and response-ability” (Oliver 2009, 21). The politics of such a move is not that we should listen more intently or study animal behavior more in depth but rather that we should refocus an attention to the ways in which we are already in

relation with and respond to animals. Most importantly, we must begin to question the ways in which we respond to animal others. What is important to draw from this treatment of animals is that an ethics concerned with response is not distracted by questions of language, likeness, or human qualities/cultures. However, what is highlighted is an attention to animal response to our presence—to our relationships. A knowing glance might convey anger, hunger, or love from one being to another. Feminist animal studies argues that the acknowledgement of this form of subjective activity is integral to the formation of a more encompassing and less oppressive recognition of individuals. These kinds of ethics-of-care and ethics of representation demand both a material response to animals as well as a disciplinary response to the animal. It is this move that is paralleled within the growing discipline of animal studies in an attempt to respond to a feminist ethics-of-care that does not take into account the ontology or ethics of representation of animal others.

### *Animal Studies*

Cary Wolfe argues that Animal studies' commitments can be said to be broken up into two disparate types: the ontological question of animality, 'the animal', and discussions of different disciplinary treatments of animals in theory and the conditions of actual, material nonhuman animals as companions and in relation to human animals (Wolfe 2009). This argument for animal studies parallels the larger structure of the chapter that sets apart two main questions of ethics: the ethics of representation and the practical ethics of animal experience/liberation. Animal studies, as it emerges within this small description, comes from a history of literary critique that is intimately concerned with the ethics of representation. While it can be said that such theorizing

necessarily calls for a critique and similar shift within the practical ethics and political aspects of engagement, it should not be read as a conflation between the representation and practice. These areas are two distinct ethical concerns that do not mirror, but could be said to intra-relate with, one another. Animal studies necessarily critiques the ethics of representation that seem pervasive within the animal rights models and the feminist ethics-of-care. Such understandings of representation become self-reflexive and open to negotiation and change within the parameter of animal studies. It can be said then that animal studies shifts the ways in which representations are used within and across disciplines founded upon sado-humanist logics and language/languageless binaries. Animal studies offers a means out of a sado-humanist ethics of representation that more clearly works with the theoretical and practical aspects of a feminist animal liberation.

The first commitment stands as the most menacing attack on scholarly disciplines when questions of the animal are theorized seriously. It has been well characterized the ways in which animal studies has moved, in this case but applicable to others, history scholarship “away from an earlier form of history which focused on human ideas about and attitudes towards animals in which animals were mere blank pages onto which humans wrote meaning” but more aptly “traces many ways in which humans construct *and are constructed* by animals in the past” (Fudge in Wolfe 2009). It can be well noted that historically animals have been treated as *objects* of study rather than *subjects* who can make demands and have needs other than food, water, and care. Animal studies remains a multifaceted academic practice that does not just call for a shift in the way nonhuman others are theoretically and ethically treated by humans. Wolfe argues “the question that occupy animal studies can be

addressed adequately only if we confront them on two levels: not just the level of content, thematic, and the object of knowledge (the animal studied by animal studies) but also the level of theoretical and methodological approach (*how* animal studies studies the animal)” (Wolfe 2009, 568). This second consideration is where animal studies seem to bite academic practice the hardest. The content and practice of animal studies exposes the sort of (sado-)humanism and what Wolfe calls the “pluralism” that shifts the frames of consideration from human to animal to animal and so on (Wolfe 2009, 568). This argument against pluralism is the same as the feminist ethic-of-care critique of sameness. Wolfe suggests that ontological pluralism shifts the frames of reference and representation from animal to human to animal without any question of changing frames or methodologies. He contends that a major portion of the animal studies project then will be rethinking the ways in which the ethics of representation bare down upon the formation of a new and radical ontology.

Animal studies attempts to emphasize the question of the animal not as a periphery but as the main subject of understanding, investigation, and theorizing an ethics of representation. At once a discipline is faced with its own anthropocentrism and speciesism, as well as the temptation of such a line of theorizing promises. Cora Diamond has noted that observed and theorized human and nonhuman difference “may indeed start out as a biological difference, but it becomes something for human thought through being taken up and made something *of*—by generations of human beings, in their practices, their art, their literature, their religion” (Diamond in Wolfe 2009). The visible differences between humans and those excluded from the *Homo sapiens* species can easily flow to the cultural explanations of difference. Observations such as “My dog doesn’t speak English.” seem perfectly natural in context. Animal

studies has made clear the ways in which the animal-lack-culture arguments are one, untrue since many nonhuman animals possess complex cultural practices but also how the arguments themselves anthropocentrize the debate by attempting to box the nonhuman animal into a narrow culturally-based (human) subjectivity. Humanness remains the only intelligible subjectivity in a comparatively anthropocentric discipline and theorizing. It should be noted that within an animal studies framework one of the basic motivations is the problem of speaking for and speaking with animal others. A radical shift in the ontology of what is a subject necessarily invokes a change within what can be heard, communicated, counted, and morally considered.

Nonhuman others rarely if ever fit into these narrow representations of subjectivity which leads to the human domination of nonhuman animal populations through factory farming and other like activities. As Wolfe points out, treatment and understand of animal others can “change, animal studies asks, after (at least some of) the animals treated in [an ethics of representation] undergo an ontological shift from things, to in some sense, persons” (Wolfe 2009, 567). Such a shift can similarly be observed within the feminist ethic-of-care where attention given to animals forces us to reevaluate our conception of animals as animate objects and begin to treat them as individuals. It seems this move is symptomatic of the collapse that occurs within different models of subjectivity. Whereas a human can occupy the full possibilities of subjectivity, animal others can only inhabit different parts of this subjectivity in a failed attempt to become complete subjects. Seeing the novel abilities of animals does signal a sort of movement towards a more complete subjectivity but that end point will always be indicative of humanness so long as theories of subjectivity are entrenched within a sado-humanist framework and ethics of representation.

Animal studies' questions attempt a larger disciplinary critique of cultural studies and similar academic practices that contain a certain anthropocentric underpinning. Wolfe argues "animal studies, if taken seriously, would not so much extend or refine a certain mode of cultural studies as bring it to an end" (Wolfe 2009, 568). Within the practice of cultural studies animals have served as a sort of thematic approach as object, evidence, or modest example. As Susan McHugh writes, "a systematic approach to reading animals in literature necessarily involves coming to terms with a discipline that in many ways appears organized by the studied avoidance of just such questioning" (McHugh in Wolfe 2009, 569). Forms of cultural studies, including queer theory in this case, have avoided or even shaped themselves to avoid such questions of animality, biology, or the treatment of animal others. Avoiding the pluralistic argument, the formulations of queer theories have blocked such a movement by the mere fact that historically animals have been mainly considered within the natural sciences, which historically maintain an uneasy relationship with queer theory and sexualized minorities. Foucault and others have pointed out the damages that have come from the scientific inquiry and treatment of sexual others as deviant objects of study-aberrations. Jennifer Terry has similarly demonstrated the ways in which discourses of natural science have served as means of natural domination and understanding of sexual practice, normalizing reproduction and specific coupling of oppositely sexed bodies within the theories of evolution, genetics, and biodiversity in general. It is no surprise then, as McHugh points out, that certain practices of cultural studies in general, and queer theory in particular, maintain a strict line of human consideration from discourses of animality that were previously levied against sexual minorities.

It is important to articulate that animal studies questions these cross-over moments of sexual, speciesist, sado-humanist, racial, and gendered oppression and their multiple intersections. Wolfe argues “the full force of animal studies, then, resides in its power to remind us that it is not enough to reread and reinterpret—from a safe ontological distance, as it were—the relation of metaphor and species difference, the cross-pollination of speciesist, sexist, and racist discursive structures in literature, and so on” (Wolfe 2009, 569). It would be wrong to say that this chapter or thesis argues that species should be added to the ‘top’ of the oppression list but rather that within an intersectional framework we must necessarily include a species based analysis. Importantly “as long as [animal studies] leaves unquestioned the humanist schema of the knowing subject who undertakes such a reading, then it sustains the very humanism and anthropocentrism that animal studies sets out to question” (Wolfe 2009, 569). One of the largest problems, as articulated previously, with queer theories is that they inherit a kind of sado-humanism that requires this knowing human subject through its disavowal of the non-responsive animal. In the practices of queer theory, as Gayle Rubin has articulated, sex should be judged on the pleasure it gives those involved who consent rather than its normative character. However the sado-humanist assumption underlying this formulation it is easily shown, in whatever way we would like to articulate it. The practice of giving and obtaining consent is done linguistically or at least in human terms and most times pleasure is judged on whether the subject says they are experiencing pleasure and another person hears/understands this description. Wolfe articulates this problem of the humanist core of seemingly postmodern or anti-anthropocentric models of thinking.

Kari Weil attempts to draw upon larger discussions of ‘speaking for’ others and how they relate to the ethics of representation within animal studies. She notes that Gayatri Spivak’s postcolonial critique of giving voice or speaking for others “will only result in their speaking the language of Western intellectuals or being further dependent upon Western intellectuals to speak for them” (Weil 2009, 3). Spivak motivated by a problem in understanding the desires and future of a postcolonial India and larger subaltern questions the ability to speak at all. It is not so much a problem of translation in the sense that there are words/desires being conveyed and not understood but rather that in the translation of the subaltern to the West the communications of the subaltern can only be conveyed in the language of the oppressors and necessarily will conform to the syntax, vocabulary, rhetoric, and tone which it would otherwise not have or be understood within. Weil also notes Franz Kafka’s writing on Red Peter from “A Report to an Academy” as a moment in which language (or a larger notion of assimilation into a language) can do extreme ontological and epistemological damage. She notes that “language is at the core of Kafka’s critique of assimilation as a process that gives voice only by destroying the self that would speak” (Weil 2009, 3). Mirroring Spivak’s concern with assimilation or understanding the subaltern, Weil argues that Kafka’s description of the erasing/disappearing subject was a way of grappling with the violence of assimilation or speaking for, but more understanding, the other.

Motivated by these concerns Weil suggests that ‘speaking for’ remains a central concern of animal studies and larger feminist critiques. Motivated by postcolonial anxieties over assimilation in a globalizing order, Weil asks how we might “understand and give voice to others or to experiences that seem impervious to our

means of understanding; how to attend to difference without appropriating or distorting it; how to hear and acknowledge what it may not be possible to say” (Weil 2009, 4). For Kafka and Spivak it could be argued that any words understood from the other can be understood as a projection of the Western interpreter onto the other that was made to form words. As Wolfe notes “what can it mean to imagine a language we cannot understand, spoken by a being who cannot speak?” but more by a being who is not morally recognized (Wolfe 2003, 1). It follows that the animal becomes the marker or theoretical experiment for which certain questions can be asked. Animals being to theoretically and practically teach us. In a similar move to Oliver, how then can we begin to learn from, but more importantly take stock of the diversity of, experience we are confronted with in other animal lives?

The ontological shift from the recognition only of human-(like)human to human-animal, or more animal-animal, relations attempts to grapple with the problem of ‘living with’ and, in part, ‘speaking for’ others. Vicki Hearne argues that “human-animal relations cannot be regarded as incomplete versions of human-human relations but must be regarded as complete versions of relations between different kinds of animals” (Hearne in Weil 2009, 8). Weil connects this shifting ontological move with a larger problem of commensurability. She notes that “training, like language compels me to acknowledge that there is another phenomenal world or *Umwelt*...even as it reveals that our worlds (and our means of expressing them) are not commensurate” (Weil 2009, 8). Jakob von Uexküll uses the term *Umwelt* or ‘self-centered world’ to describe “biological foundations that lie at the very epicenter of the study of both communication and signification in the human [and non-human] animal”—*Umwelt* conveys the ways in which animals can share an

environment but understand, perceive, and navigate it in radically different (self-centered) ways (Uexküll 1920). While a shift in what can be recognized as such is important in that these relations were previously invisible in such analyses, it is important to note that a shifting ontology does not change the fundamental incommensurability of different languages or animal communication systems.

The turn to animals is a manifestation of the desire to understand animal others outside of linguistic engagements or representations to avoid an asymmetry of power and production that stems from the privilege and uniqueness of human language within sado-humanism. For example, Weil notes that “Deleuze and Guattari want to free humans and animals from meaning altogether and thus undo the very identities that conform a distinction between human and animal” in an attempt to get away from the an inevitable anthropocentric attempts at formulating a common language between the disparate groups (Weil 2009, 12). However, as Weil quickly notes, “differences between animals and humans are displaced onto differences within the human: to deterritorialize is to become aware of the animal-otherness within the human” (Weil 2009, 12). Within a certain deconstruction, the differences within the human emerge from the spectrum of animal experience. This type of argument is common the discussions of post-humanism within literary critique. There is, however, nothing more human than the discussion of post-humanism—the human is not lost but reified as central in such a discursive move. The mere fact that such a deconstruction is conducted within a human language necessarily brings with it certain sado-humanist categories of becoming rather than antihuman or inhuman categories.

Working within this narrative of deconstruction, Weil attempts to articulate the representational concerns that center on the problem of ‘speaking for’ that demand a reevaluation of living with and relating to animal others. The motivation behind such theoretical move can be said to lie within the realm of ontology. While living with might present a problem of epistemology that some have articulated in the rhetoric of companionship, the problem of speaking for deals with needs, desires, and practical outcomes such as food, shelter, medical care, etc. Weil argues that “the ethical turn that has followed in the wake of deconstruction is an attempt to recognize and extend care to others while acknowledging that we may not know what the best form of care is for an other we cannot presume to know” within certain representations (Weil 2009, 13). (Although it should be noted that, practically speaking, there are obvious ways in which embodied beings’ needs are understandable.) Despite this representational uncertainty of the other we can still recognize the ways in which lives co-evolve and interact in important and meaningful ways. Weil notes that Haraway, and animal studies more generally, argues that the human has “coevolved with innumerable species without whom we would not be who we are and with whom we share our environments and their resources” (Weil 2009, 14). Within the rereading of ecological history comes a certain awareness of the ways in which we understand the world are necessarily marked by “our irreducibly multiple and variable, complexly valenced, infinitely reconfigurable relations with other animals, including each other” (Herrnstein-Smith in Weil 2009, 15). The ways in which we understand our environments or ecosystems cannot be defined without both the history of the space but also an understanding of previous intra-subjective relations within that space. In a desire to live ethically with others, we find ourselves

related to or living with animal others both in definition of the human but also practically contributing to our lives as companions.

It can be said that, in speaking for animal others, in reflection we have often said the wrong thing therefore a move towards a representational ethics of unintelligibility may help to better our practices of speaking for others. Emily Clark notes that thinking through the representational problem of unintelligibility we must “understand *human language* as a force, power, indeed a kind of colonization, one which is pitched in opposition to other kinds of language (nonhuman, nonlinguistic), as well as silence” (Clark 2011, 12). Human language is often set up within a hierarchy of sameness—what do we have in common?—rather than theorized in the multitude of differences that are left out of attempts to homogenize, equalize, represent, or bring together abject others. Clark situates her discussion of representation within a larger discussion of J.M Coetzee’s novel *Elizabeth Costello* that follows the life and lecturing of the novel’s protagonist Elizabeth Costello. Costello is critically concerned with human interactions and relations to the lives of animals and a growing movement of literary censorship. Clark demonstrates the ways in which “Coetzee exposes the codependence of representation and the human via a strategy of unintelligibility” (Clark 2011, 13). Clark’s use of the rhetoric of unintelligibility signals a move towards a changing ethics of representation that move beyond what can necessarily matter or become linguistically intelligible—literally beyond what we can (humanly) understand. She argues that “ultimately it is the text’s repetitive and constitutive failures of representation – its failure to ‘speak for,’ successfully, but a failure which the text narrates for us, which we witness ourselves – which make the text unintelligible” (Clark 2011, 13). The text as Clark reads it stands as an

unintelligible moment of representation. We are brought to understand, through the figure of the unintelligible, how the moments of silence can be as productive as the intelligible within an ethics of representation.

Costello continually fails to say what she wants or successfully speak for the animals she wishes to represent in a similar way to that in which animal liberationist theory fails to speak for moments as simple as walks with my companion dog Bear. Following this subjective polemic of unintelligibility and the failures of speaking for others, Clark argues that:

...if we agree that there is indeed a connection between representationalism and speciesism – that our understanding of what it means to be human not only desires and demands a specific kind of languaged representation and revelation, but depends upon them – then the unintelligibility of this text challenges not just the ethics of representation and speaking for, but necessarily the notions of the human and nonhuman as well. (Clark 2011, 13).

Such an argument can be extended to other writings or failures within animal studies that center the human again in an anthropocentric posthumanism. If animal studies is committed to a liberationist framework to end the domination of nonhuman and abject others, we must be able to work through the politics of contextual vegetarianism, the end of factory farming, and living in significant otherness that does not make animals killable through moves of freedom (from laboratories) and unfreedoms in helping animals to safely negotiate a sado-humanist symbolic. It is my desire that such a politics of unintelligibility be read not as a discursive flourish but rather a bluntly practical ethical call in which these problems of ‘speaking for’ animal others can engender a practical political framework. The very reality of unintelligibility has material-discursive consequences and defies these limitations of absolutism in favor for a more horizontal analysis of the intersecting and changing

ways animals are oppressed within different ethics of representation. A radical ontology of animal representation demands our attention and new means of relations that ‘speak for’ the lives, desires, and experiences in less violent ways.

The ways in which we touch others largely impacts our becoming in the world and how we come to matter and define ourselves as humans. In terms of ethics of representation and living with others, Weil argues that “we might want to call an ethical relating to animals (whether in theory or in art) ‘critical anthropomorphism’ in the sense that we open ourselves to touch and be touched by others as fellow subjects and may imagine their pain, pleasure, and need in anthropomorphic terms but must stop short of believing that we can know their experience” (Weil 2009, 16). The inevitable presence of anthropomorphism within ethical relating might not be a harm in the sense that we are projecting our desires, pleasures, and social norms onto animal others but rather attempting to interpret their desires within the only framework available to us: a human framework. Aligned with Gruen’s call for an empathetic engagement with others, we must keep in mind the ways in which humans matter, we matter, in our imaginative processes. However this sort of critical move cannot be extended too far as Derrida has argued in his work on ethical actions and animals. The “very notion of ethical relating has been grounded in a humanism that gives permission to act unethically towards animals” in which the ethical engagement was determined through sado-humanist terms of human uniqueness and the right to dominate others (Weil 2009, 17). Following Derrida then Weil argues that as the foundations of human exceptionalism crumble as previously human traits are “shown as an illusory exclusivity, either because [they are] shared by some animals or not possessed by some humans” we can see then that the “‘industrial, scientific and

technical violence' that is wrought upon nonhuman animals must change. 'The relations between humans and animals *must* change'" (Weil 2009 and Derrida & Roudinesco in Weil 2009, 17). It follows that the terms of engagement with animal others must change not only as a means of ending the violence against animal others but as a means of effecting a larger change demanded by living with animal others and attempting to speak for/with others. It is not useful to propagate language/languageless or intelligible/unintelligible binaries in the sense that as humans (compared to nonhuman others) we will always be the ones with authority over ourselves, our politics, and our actions no matter what. What is demanded in our engagement with animal others is that we think through the very ways that unintelligible others come to matter in relation to us humans and how we come to matter for these others. While moving away from such an un/intelligible binary as it currently stands, we must argue within an ethics of representations for the increased intelligibility of subjectivities that lie outside the anthropocentric foundations of sado-humanism.

Animal studies not only begins to take nonhuman others seriously in scholarly work but questions the core values of multiple disciplines and bodies of knowledge that purport a humanist subjectivity as a model for all others. Wolfe quotes Derrida by saying the change within animal studies marks a new attention to the ethics of representation. Specifically "the word *can* [pouvoir] changes sense and sign here once one asks, 'Can they *suffer*?' ...the important thing is rather what impels it towards self-contradiction, something we will later relate back to an autobiography" (Wolfe 2003, 28). What animal studies brings then is new attention to animals not as lesser forms of human subjectivity but as individuals who can make moral claims on others through

suffering. This focus on an increased representation of suffering however is at once reflexive and levies against the human a new consciousness of a shared experience of life and death within the ontology of subjectivity. This move fortifies the essential connection between the ways in which certain experiences are represented and the political inclusion as subjects-of-a-life. For Derrida “mortality resides there, as the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion” (Wolfe 2003, 28). Animal studies questions the very lines that are drawn between the human and the animal and the experiences a recognized life brings with it. Not so much a strict vitalism that all life should be valued equally regardless of kind but “Derrida fundamentally questions the structure of the ‘auto-’ (as autonomy, as agency, as authority over one’s autobiography) of the humanist subjectivity by riveting our attention on the embodied finitude that we share with nonhuman animals, a finitude that it has been the business of humanism largely to disavow” (Wolfe 2009, 570). This embodied experience, once rendered visible, calls into being a new awareness of companionship but more importantly a moral responsibility within that relationship. For Derrida this refolding of representation demands a change in the ontology of life as relations to others. What is at stake here is the terms that are available within such a relation but also the politics of such a representation.

Derrida speaks of a second type of finitude that calls into question the important linguistic privilege of humanistic subjectivity and understanding included within an animal studies’ critique. Wolfe notes that Derrida articulates this mortality as the “finitude we experience in our subjection to the radically ahuman ethnicity and mechanicity of language (understood in the broadest sense as a semiotic system

through which creatures ‘respond’ to each other)” (Wolfe 2009, 571). In contrast to our confrontation with a stark mortality, this second finitude has an impact on the formulation of seemingly human concepts and subjectivities. Recalling feminist arguments for an increased visibility of the pain, suffering, and torturous deaths of animal others, Derrida Wolfe argues that this finitude displays how as humans “‘we’ are always radically other, already in- or ahuman in our very being...in our subjection to and constitution in the materiality and technicity of a language that is always on the scene before we are, as a radically ahuman precondition for our subjectivity, for what makes us human” (Wolfe 2009, 571). Within this description of finitude, we can observe the radical critique of the sado-humanist grounding within cultural studies that animal studies brings to the forefront, in a critique of language as constitutive, an anthropocentric theory and practice of subjectivity. Importantly, animal studies brings to light previously unturned assumptions of what and who constitutes a intelligible, knowledgeable subject. It is within the continuation of an underlying sado-humanism through an unquestioned acceptance of language’s constitutive force and knowledge formation that the human/animal binary lies. An ethics of representations within animal studies rests upon the partiality of knowing, being, and being (a species), and confronting the liberal and sado-humanism that goes unquestioned in multiple disciplinary pursuits. The change within such an ethics of representation comes not only from a disavowal of sado-humanist logic and theorization but constitutes a similar change within an ethics of practice that comes from within this relation to animal others.

Derrida proposes a theory of language that is not constitutive from the outside in but rather the inside out—subjective to material rather than materially subjective—

in order to escape a language/languageless binary that is usually imposed upon such an engagement with animal others within an ethics of representation. He argues “if one reinscribes language in a network of possibilities that do not merely encompass it but mark it irreducibly from the inside, everything changes” (Derrida 2009 116). Language becomes an object of becoming, always constitutive within context—formation as you go. Derrida points out that what he is “proposing here should allow us to take into account scientific knowledge about the complexity of ‘animal languages,’ genetic coding, all forms of marking within which so-called human language...does not allow us to ‘cut’” (Derrida 2009 117). Within this formation, language can act as a symbolic of reference rather than constitutive of a subject. The material becomings of a subject are not entrenched within the linguistic or textual moment of description but in the movement of cellular motors, genetic codes being written, transcribed, and expressed, and knowing glances. If successful, this description of language would be incredibly powerful for the future of animal studies in that it not only opens up the view of consideration but completely recreates historical models and ethics of representation. Whereas before a subject had to speak for itself, want to speak for itself, or have someone speak on its behalf, now the subject does not need to speak words at all. The subject, by virtue of being and becoming the subject, is constituted outside of a language/languageless or silence/speaking binary. How a subject comes to matter within an ethics of representation and relation is not dependent upon a strictly discursive narrative but on models of communications and information that lie outside of human language.

However it is important to note the possibility for hierarchy built on top of such a model: humans are still able to speak with or without this acknowledgement of

others for which a stricter picture of what is ethical is needed. Within this human ability for language in foil to animal other's inability to communicate through human terms there emerges a "double bind: the need to advocate certain principles of rights or protections with the knowledge of that faulty foundation" (Weil 2009, 18). Weil advocates 'theory' a means out of this double bind in order to better formulate engaged theory (and ethics) of representation. Within the ethics of representation then can lie "not a denial of difference, by any means, but rather an attention to the construction of difference at the very foundation of the ethical" (Weil 2009, 18). Theory in this formulation reveals "ethics as an essentially human duty, but only by constantly challenging our understanding of what it is to be human" (Weil 2009, 18). Such a realization does not necessitate a move into a hierarchy of theorizing where the human sits atop untouched but rather a horizontal analysis that touches all involved in a changing ethics of representation.

Being aware and critical of our inevitable anthropomorphism within theorizing, we are automatically calling attention to the lacks within such an ethics of representation, but more importantly the differences in animality that create the problem of speaking for in the first place. Weil argues that:

[theory] cannot avoid seeing the animal suffering around us, but has contradictory foundations on which to judge the good or the right thing to do about it. Responding to an urgent call for concern, those of us working on 'the animal question[s]' may only be able, like Red Peter, to make a report, but hopefully such reports will enable us to make decisions (for that is our human prerogative and responsibility) that will to the best of our imperfect and partial knowledge, enhance the lives of all animals, ourselves included. (Weil 2009, 20).

By speaking for the other within an ethics of representation it must be remembered that such a representation is always partial and strategic in construction within our human imagination. More importantly, the knowledge we have is gathered must be

done within a critical anthropomorphism rather than a violent appropriation or (sado-humanist) projection onto the animal other. We can understand this realization of an always imperfect and partial knowledge not signaling not only the turn to know more, relate better, engage deeper with others but more calling for a shift in the ontology of the relation itself. By working through the problem of 'speaking for' others and acknowledging the limits of the language/lanugageless binary in our lives with others, we must revalue unintelligible subjectivities and silent forces as productive. More generally while we can reject sado-humanism in its violence against animals and instrumental tendencies in an ethics of representation, we cannot reject or, more importantly, forget the real ways in which humans matter in the world. Although, our knowledge within an ethics of representation may always be partial due to our human perceptual limit and imagination, our ethical practice should not reflect a similar 'partiality,' whatever that would mean. Such a stance would obscure privilege and power, which may not be utterly knowable, but is certainly identifiable ontologically and ethically. While it is important to extend our ability to understand and empathize with the experiences, personalities, eccentricities, and the suffering of animal others in an increasing and radical ontology, our practice should reflect a radical call to end the suffering of animals on the basis of this empathetic engagement. Within an animal liberation based ethics of practice, it is our duty as humans to guide animal others within a violently appropriated human-symbolic world that remains unintelligible to non-human others. To fail to respond appropriately to such an empathetic realization of and engagement with the suffering of nonhuman others would be comparable to sociopathy.

### *Troubling Haraway*

Donna Haraway has attempted to articulate this feeling of being in relation to animal others through a description of significant otherness. Within an ethic of care Haraway writes that, for her, significant otherness is a “vulnerable, on-the-ground work that cobbles together non-harmonious agencies and ways of living that are accountable both to their disparate inherited histories and to their barely possible but absolutely necessary joint features” (Haraway 2003, 7). What is important to draw from this is not the description of incoherence and irreconcilability between the agents but the necessity of those points of discord as exactly what is needed to maintain the companionship. When drawn into a relationship with another, the material reality of that moment, if honest, is based on a sort of shared vulnerability that Haraway understands as a necessary component of the interaction and subsequent actions. This description would be indicative of a feminist tradition of action towards non/human animals. She notes that a “feminist inquiry is about understanding how things work, who is in the action, what might be possible, and how worldly actors might somehow be accountable to and love each other less violently” (Haraway 2003, 7). This attention brings about a new form of natural and cultural consciousness that Haraway deems naturecultures.

A movement towards the word ‘natureculture’ is Haraway’s attempt at describing the terms historical significant otherness to one another and the impossibility of speaking of, learning about, or understanding one without the other. Feminists within the care ethic note that “feminists who ignore the realities of the perception of animals in science and other fields not only are exhibiting limited and warped vision, but also are failing to see the linkages among the oppressions noted

earlier and, by their silence, are allowing enormous suffering to continue unaddressed” (Haraway 2003, 12). By considering animal others seriously, the humanities and the sciences are brought into stark relation to one another. It is also important to note the ways in which science is a stand in for nature and everything else as culture. The natural sciences, as they are called, act as a sort of gatekeeper for the knowledge that lays dormant within cells, germ lines, organs, organisms, animals and human bodies. Feminists point to the suffering of animals within scientific practice as a means of linking culture to the nature. The argument, though as blunt, is that natural pursuits are carried out at the cost of extreme nonhuman animal suffering and unnecessary death supported by the tradition of sado-humanism.

By bringing these practices into relation one can begin to observe the efficacy of the term natureculture as not only bringing these two historically disparate points of understanding together but, also, the ways in which they were never separate to begin with. Haraway argues that her reading of Marilyn Strathern, an anthropologist of Papa New Guinean histories and politics in addition to English kinship formations and habits, leads to her description of naturecultures since Strathern herself was an “ethnographer of naturecultures” (Haraway 2003, 8). She insist that Strathern “taught us why conceiving of ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ as either polar opposites or universal categories is foolish...instead of opposites, we get the whole sketchpad of the modern geometrician’s fevered brain with which to draw relationality” (Haraway 2003, 8). The binary between culture and nature acted only as a means of domination of those who fell in the middle and the opposite of end of the liberal, human subject. Proudly atop the cultural mountain human theorists and scientists would look upon the natural as something to be controlled, tamed, studied, understood, and utilized.

So long as the natural project could be removed from the cultural then pure and rational science could be carried out in first world labs full of old, academically educated, white men. Women and nonhuman animals, as it has been continually noted, stood at the bottom of a patriarchal hierarchy that attempted to indefinitely rip nature and culture apart in the name of objectivity. The term natureculture does not signify a new academic or symbolic movement that Haraway invented but a description of a state of being previously rendered invisible in order to justify and permit the atrocities of culture and nature as they stood alone.

Haraway argues for an ethics of companion species as a means of both theoretically and practically relating to animal others that rupture previous models of rational subjectivity and individuation. She notes that “to be one is always to *become with* many” as a means of illuminating the many ways that we as organisms are always in (at least a symbiotic biological) relation to others (Haraway 2008, 4). Companion species can be figured as a relation where “the partners do not precede the meeting; species of all kinds, living and not, are consequent on a subject- and object-shaping dance of encounters” (Haraway 2008, 4). The world is remade in the image of companion species. Haraway, recalling the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, stresses “what happens in the folds is what is important. Infoldings of the flesh *are* worldly embodiment...Interfaces are made out of interacting grappling devices” visualized and realized within the figure of companion species (Haraway 2008, 249). By thinking through an ethic of companion species we can begin to see the many obvious ways that ecofeminists and others have historically argued the world should be encountered in both its representation and our practice. The notion of a shared becoming with others is central to the engagement. Through what Haraway has

previously called the god-trick, humans have reproduced the Great Divides between nature/culture, human/animal by ignoring or more accurately making invisible the multiple ways that we become with others. Instead what comes to light is the ways in which others can become instrumental within the sado-humanist traditions of consumption, scientific research, entertainment, and farming/breeding. By focusing on the ways in which we become with others rather than the ways in which others can be made instrumental in a move that recalls colonial rationalities, an ethics of companion species forces a redefinition of the ways in which humans, animals, and others come to matter as subjects-of-a-life.

While there is obvious potential in the ethics of companion species, Haraway's larger discussion of the practical ethics of such an engagement should be questioned. Zipporah Weisberg has critiqued the specific ways that Haraway fails to argue for any large-scale change in the lives of animal others that should follow from her representational ethic of companion species. Weisberg argues that Haraway's use of companion species:

not only falls far short of any real challenge to the most problematic aspects of humanism outlined by Haraway, but reveals a disturbing collusion with the very structures of domination she purports to oppose...Haraway's attempt to develop a theory and ethics of companion species within an instrumental framework is itself born out of the humanist project of domination she ostensibly disavows...Haraway undermines what might otherwise be constructed as an effort to overcome the speciesist ethos which characterizes humanist ideology and the normalization of brutality against animals that it fosters. (Weisberg 2009, 22).

Haraway's practical ethics are then in opposition with her representational ethics. Such a reluctance to move beyond an ethics of representation is indicative maintaining a sado-humanist logic within a practical ethics that results in a speciesist ethic that values all others as means to humanist ends. Despite representations of

animals that suffer within such instrumental hierarchies, Haraway maintains a critical yet anthropocentric value system that allows animals to die at the hands of factory farmers and researchers to progress the narrative of scientific understanding or human well-being. It seems that, from a representational ethics of companion species, we as humans should be made to rethink our relation to animal others and be compelled to practically and politically change the material lives of animal others that suffer in the oppressive and torturous realities of animal testing and factory farming.

Haraway does not call for the end of animal testing, for example in *When Species Meet*, as one might expect. She herself says that she would hit the metaphorical 'kill button' to sentence an animal to death within the laboratory. The animal in the laboratory, whether made into a companion species or not, is continually made killable "because of the humanist view of the nonhuman as the mere stuff of control" (Weisberg 2009, 33). Weisberg correctly notes that "the reduction of animals to instruments and objects of calculation is *inherently* interchangeable with their inequality with humans, which is, in turn, *inherently* interchangeable with their total unfreedom and violation at our hands" (Weisberg 2009, 28-9). Animals are made into slaves in the laboratory setting and subjected to unfathomable pain and torture at the hands of human experiments. Haraway suggests that in an ethics of companion species we could say that by ascribing a new agency and relation to animal others that their lives are not dominated but rather they offer themselves to experiments in relation to the humans in the laboratory. However this ascription to a "mutual reciprocity" between human experimenters and animals others is false and only serves as apology for the experiments carried out not with animals but *on* animals (Weisberg 2009, 42). Animal

others are relegated to the status not of companion but “*slaves*” within the laboratory setting (Weisberg 2009, 36).

Haraway’s rhetoric of companion species loses any practical consequence if we as humans are not called into a relation with animal others that does not lead to the end of instrumentality and killing of animal others and remains a discursive flourish rather than effecting political and practical changes. Following Marcuse’s work on instrumentality, Weisberg argues that, in order to move away from an ethos of sado-humanism and into a politically effective companion species, we must acknowledge “instrumentality *is* hierarchy, *is* calculability, *is* inequality, *is* violation, *is* unfreedom” (Weisberg 2009, 29). Haraway’s practical ethics can be seen “to further reinforce rather than challenge instrumental domination and the institutionalized torture of animal others” rather than to move to end their suffering within laboratory settings (Weisberg 2009, 38). Weisberg argues that such a contradiction in ethical rhetoric and political consequences should that “an ethics based on shared suffering such as Haraway describes, therefore, appears, once again, to be more of a discursive exercise than an attempt to create the conditions for any concrete ethico-political transformation” (Weisberg 2009, 39). In line with such a realization Weisberg notes that Haraway’s ‘shared suffering’ does nothing to actually dismantle structures of domination and torture but rather serves as a means of apology between humans and their instrumental, animal objects of experiment and consumption.

In this view, animal studies must adopt an animal liberationist view of animal oppression, domination and suffering to achieve any kind of political and ethical consequence beyond merely discursive ends. In terms of animal killing (e.g. hunting, laboratory experiments, factory farming, etc.), Haraway does not call for an end by

any means but a discursive shift in the framework by which we understand animal subjects and their agency. Haraway seems to believe that rather than merely killing animals we should be concerned with “killing well” by citing the example of her colleague hunting wild pigs (Haraway 2008, 295). However Weisberg correctly argues that “‘killing well’ is still *killing*. Indeed, this conception of killing well, much like that of sharing suffering, appears to be more concerned with assuaging the conscience of killers than protecting their potential victims” (Weisberg 2009, 44). We must acknowledge that “the animal subject-turned-meat is a product of our project of domination: its carcass tells the story of our ongoing conquest of the nonhuman” no matter the circumstances of its death without exception (Weisberg 2009, 44). Even within an ethics of face and companion species that Haraway discursively argues, she adopts a practical framework that allows for the killing of animal others and absolution of (human) unethical actions. Within a severe asymmetry of analysis, Weisberg notes “this claim is indicative of speciesist and anthropocentric prioritization of how humans feel about killing other animal, not about how *animals* might feel as the victims of killing, no matter how ‘well’ it is done” (Weisberg 2009, 44).

For animal studies to move beyond a discursive analysis without political consequences (or at least the few political consequences Haraway seems to effect within her ethic), we cannot in theorizing or practice fall prey to the same structures of domination and sado-humanism that Haraway seems to both intentionally and unintentionally support. Weisberg notes of Haraway’s failure that “it is a fatal ethical and political mistake to combine phenomenological conceptions of intersubjectivity, co-constitution, and so on with an affirmation of institutionalized violence against

animals” (Weisberg 2009, 59). For the critique of animal studies to be effective and lasting:

we will need to develop an ethical phenomenology that is coupled with a radical political critique to yield a wholesale rejection—a total *refusal*—of domination. Unless Animal Studies takes as its premise that instrumental domination of nonhuman animals is politically and ethically unacceptable—full stop—then it has little to offer beyond frivolous excursions into the limits of discourse (Weisberg 2009, 59).

### *Conflicting Values in a Multicultural Context*

Both a feminist ethic-of-care and an animal liberationist stance could be seen as colonialist endeavors in their call to end factory farming, animal testing, and more generally animal suffering/oppression regardless of a cultural context. The politics and ethics of animal studies should rely a multicultural and practical framework in order to respond to the charge of feminist care ethics and mainstream animal ethics as being colonialist. Within the problem of ‘speaking for’ others exists a larger conflict between the cultural values that different communities ascribe to nature and animals. Lori Gruen has attempted to develop an ethical schema through which we can understand oppression, domination, and inter-/intra-community conflicts that breaks away from a complete cultural relativism in terms of environmental conflicts/norms and ethics. I am considering this form of practical ethics within a cultural relativism in hopes that we may be able to deal with differencing cultural contexts that ascribe differing value to nature and others. Gruen argues that in “light of the atrocities that occurred in Kosovo and Rwanda, the developing slave trade in women and children in the Sudan, and the problems of siting toxic facilities in poor communities and communities of color across the globe, it is irresponsible to claim that each culture and/or community should be left to determine their own ethic” (Gruen 2002, 16).

There must be an (environmental/animal) ethic applied across cultural contexts, at least upon the material nature that is often the object of oppressive domination to deal with these and other problems. In the case of environmental justice, we must describe ways in which we as theorists and activists can make serious and justified interventions into conflicts that demand our attention and action. Through a distinction between inter-community (two distinct communities) and intra-community (differing populations—insiders versus a larger population—within a contained community) conflicts we can identify that a “culture is oppressive when the distribution of resources, liberties, opportunities, and well-being is skewed in such a way that some individuals or groups of individuals have access to them and others do not” (Gruen 2002, 17). Within this oppression, it is easy to see the ways in which conflicts arise not only out of an awareness of this material or social asymmetry but more often from a third party’s observation of the actions or consequences of this domination. Third parties (usually Western, human and linguistic) are uniquely suited to observe the “identifiable barriers that are constructed by one group in a culture to hold back or destroy individuals or entities in another group” (Gruen 2002, 17). It follows that oppressive cultures are unethical in that they “deny individuals or groups of individuals the ability to pursue their way of life or to express themselves” (Gruen 2002, 17). It is from this stance that we can begin to make claims but more importantly interventions deemed necessary in a multicultural context.

Gruen’s proposal then is two fold in determining the correct action to be taken in observed conflicts. First, in order for the interference within a conflict by a third party “to be a morally and practically defensible solution it must also provide a way of avoiding legitimate resentment by members of those culture” (Gruen 2002, 16).

Distinguishing between emotional and normative resentments, we must try to understand the ways in which an intervention might cause such resentments and whether or not these reactions are justifiable or not. An emotional resentment is said to be “a non-cognitive response to a judgment, action, practice or policy that one is unhappy with or aggravated by” which can be judged illegitimate insofar as it is based upon a mistaken belief or “directed at an inappropriate target” that led to such an emotional response (Gruen 2002, 17). In contrast, a normative resentment “is legitimate when a person who makes a normative commitment to promote or protect a certain set of values or practices or ways of life does not act in ways that are consistent with that commitment, and he or she is aware that not so acting is a breach of that commitment” (Gruen 2002, 17). Second, the type of conflict at stake must be determined, whether or not there is an oppressive form of domination acting upon either a silent or responsive group, and how to take action without causing legitimate resentment as previously described. In an inter-community conflict it can be said that an action is a form of oppressive domination when “the cultural activity extends beyond the culture and interferes with beings that do not reap the benefits of that culture” (Gruen 2002, 18). Gruen offers as an example the Makah’s revival of the whale hunt as a form of inter-community oppressive domination where the Makah cannot have a justifiable resentment against a US ban and environmental activist actions to stop the killing of grey whales. However Gruen does note the ways in which Makah culture may have other legitimate resentments against the US for different violations of their cultural and historical rights and practices not based upon the killing of extra-community, animal others.

The other case of intra-community conflicts provides a more complicated environment to determine whether a third party intervention is justifiable. The first kind of intra-community conflict “involves minority communities engaging in practices that violate or infringe upon the objective well-being of members of the community who themselves are seeking help from outsiders” to end the oppressive domination sparking conflict (Gruen 2002, 18). Historically such conflicts end in the legitimacy of majority views and practices at the expense and lives of minority others. Heteronormativity is an example of an end result of such an intra-community conflict within the human species during the 1890s, as Foucault explicates in his *History of Sexuality*, when certain sexualities became pathologized while others did not. Gruen rightly argues that “as long as there are insiders that are seeking assistance, there is no legitimate ground for resentment when outsiders come to help” (Gruen 2002, 18). The second kind of intra-community conflicts “involve cultural practices that clearly infringe upon the objective well-being of members of the community yet either those people accept or embrace their oppression or are not in a position to object” (Gruen 2002, 18). While these conflicts are understood as troubling for many reasons, Gruen notes that one of the seemingly incommensurable moments occurs when a third party’s desire to end oppressive domination of a group conflicts with the people’s choice to be subject to objectively oppressive practices.

However an analysis cannot stop at this realization and such a commitment should be investigated further. It could be the case where “individuals do not recognize their oppression as oppression” or cannot speak out against their oppression while on the other hand it may be the case “where the subordinated individual actually makes an informed decision to enter into the oppressive situation” for a

certain set of reasons (Gruen 2002, 18). To make a distinction between these two cases “requires a very careful examination of the beliefs and desires of the actual individuals” such as work by anthropologists, environmental scientists, ethologist, ecologists, etc (Gruen 2002 18). If a group of individuals cannot recognize their oppression as such or are not able to speak out against the oppression, Gruen argues that “there may not be legitimate reason for resentment when individuals interfere to alter or end the oppressive practice” in an attempt to alleviate a false consciousness or intractably oppressive subject position (Gruen 2002, 18). If in the later case of groups of individuals accepting or choosing to enter into their oppression an intervention that is made into such a situation could be justifiably resented. Saba Mahmood described such a case where Muslim women involved in the da’wa movement in Cairo, Egypt actively choose to enter into a visibly patriarchal system of beliefs and practices to further their own spiritual well-being and increase their favor in the eyes of Allah. A Western feminist intervention, Mahmood has argued, is necessarily colonialist and justifiably resented in that it attempts to discredit or make invisible the agency of these women by constructing them within a framework of religious domination and patriarchal coercion.

It is important to keep this ethical proposal within a framework of identifying oppressive domination based on asymmetry of resources, power, access, and well-being to avoid a Western colonialist intervention while at the same time working to end the oppression and suffering of others. Gruen’s proposal rejects colonial attempts at granting the right of environmental activists to dominate another’s cultural practices or lives, but nonetheless explores contexts in which critiques of cultures are justified. It is a reality that class, race, gender, and species positions play a large role in

what can be observed in the world. I do not want to situate this proposal for a multicultural environmental ethics or ending of speciesist and sadohumanist practices as the preeminent political problem in need of immediate attention. In a two-fold manner I want to make a call for a species and environmental ethics within a politics of balance—a balance restored in the end of oppressive domination and redistribution but a balance of the political weight given to cultural problems that are brought to our attention. My support of the call for a contextual vegetarianism that moves animals out of the ‘edible’ or ‘killable’ category is an example of restoring such a balance using Gruen’s proposed multicultural ethics. I cannot say that I have an answer or proposal for ending class conflicts that arise from the exploitation of a working class by a wealthy few in the US and around the world. I want to make clear that this practice of ethics can be a politics to end the exploitation of animal others that does not lead to further imbalances in industry and power, and exploited individuals but rather works towards a telos of balance and availability in place of our current ontology of killing and exploitation. Through activist work, the ‘identities’ should not be thought of in a vertical analysis of importance but rather a horizontal awareness of the intersection powers and oppressions that include a species-awareness in addition to the multiple forms of domination that have been previously identified by feminists and others. As a dear friend told me this would be a politics of triage rather than superficial separations to extend a medical metaphor.

*Feminist Animal Studies Ethic of Liberation*

The question of ‘speaking for’ the other is wrapped up within the problem of ‘living with’ the other. Both of these questions interrelate with the ethics of

representation and practice. In the context of my and Weisberg's previous critiques, Haraway correctly notes that "to be in a relation of use to each other is not the definition of unfreedom and violation. Such relations are almost never symmetrical ('equal' or calculable). Rather, relations of use are exactly what companions species are about" (Haraway 2008, 74). In this way dominating instrumentality as I described before would not be the equivalent to the relation that Haraway argues is a reality of companion species. This recognition stems from a larger understanding of the world and many environments of companion species as dominated by a human symbolic. Especially pertinent to the human-dog relating that Haraway is deeply involved in, this relation is an essential negotiation in an effort to protect significant others from harm who may not be able to decode a human symbolic. The speeding car should be read as 'This object injures/kills on collision. Stay out of its way' however the reality of roadkill shows the way this sign is misread by animal others outside the relations of significant otherness. Haraway argues that this relation of use "is about living responsively as mortal beings where dying and killing are not optional...response has to go into trackless territory, without even the orienting signposts of reliable chasms" (Haraway 2008, 74). In line with my previous critique, I argue that the killing of animal in laboratory settings or factory farming is indeed 'optional', the figure of death is not optional in any situation. While I believe suffering rather than death provides a better category of analysis for determining harm against animal others, I do think that the figure of death is important in our rethinking the ways in which we live with and speak for the animal other. The figure of companion species in itself should not be read as a form of domination as some theorists and activists have

argued (e.g. a common argument in a radical animal liberation movement would be to argue that all forms of animal domestication is slavery and should be ended).

The asymmetry of use can achieve ethical goods maybe not in an absolutist sense but a very practical sense. As a personal anecdote I have had the fortunate opportunity to get to know, live and dogpile with two wonderful dogs, Fuzzy and Maggie. When I take them for walks they both remain on leashes that do not cause them physical pain as far as I can tell but do allow me to keep hold of them throughout the entirety of the walk. The leash is a tool of domination. I determine this because I can physically control and restrict their actions on our walks by pulling back, stopping, or turning and the leash allows me to communicate my desires to them through the force I effect through the leash onto their bodies. Fuzzy is in the habit of being excited by the presence of other dogs and small animals, especially squirrels, that cross his path on our walks. If we were to have both Maggie and Fuzzy off of the leashes on our walks it is a very real possibility that Fuzzy may decide to chase after a squirrel he spots across the street and suffer/be killed at the hands of a car or get into fights with other dogs causing him and others physical and emotional pain in both cases. In our significant otherness, we can relate to each other—I am duty bound to walk them and allow them to pee/poop and physically exercise but I chose to restrict them on a leash to better equip them through my restriction to successfully negotiate a human-legible world. I can read the speeding car as physically dangerous whereas Fuzzy is unable to recognize it as such. While it can be said that the leash is in fact a tool of domination, it would be unjustified to read it as oppressive rather than my attempt as human other to help them navigate a dangerously sado-

humanist world that I have access to through language and can react accordingly in interspecies companionship rather than instrumentality.

Such a critique of sado-humanist representation and practice intersects with the previous chapter's discussion of queer models of subjectivity. The ways in which queer subjects are represented and become intelligible is based within a sado-humanist logic in both its failure to take into account animal others and its reliance on a language/languageless binary. Within animal studies critique, truly queer ethics of representation cannot rely on this, or any, binary if it is to commit itself to a politics of increased intelligibility, horizontal relations of power, and ethics-of-care and community. A feminist animal studies ethics of liberation calls for a shift within queer theories that base their models of representation and practice within speciesist and sado-humanist theorizings and politics. In what I term animal-attentive queer theories, I attempt to bring queer theories within a framework of feminist animal studies ethics of liberation to move beyond models of queer subjectivity and critique that rely upon sado-humanist logic. Remade to work outside of such a framework, animal-attentive queer theories take into account the many inhuman, human, and nonhuman that are brought to bear upon a queer world making. By stressing the connection, relations, and representations of others within such an ethic, we can begin to assess the many queer ways we become with human and animal others.

### **Chapter 3: Animal-Attentive Queer Theories**

I have now set up a tension, or at least brought to light the issues between animal studies/ethics and queer theories. The genealogy of queer theories, presented in Chapter One, maintains a human/animal binary that it inherits from its liberal (sado-)humanist predecessors. This binary feeds a resistance that queer theories have against embracing the inclusion of nonhuman animals/subjects as well as a positive or affirmative engagement with biological or more generally scientific practice and theory. Animal studies as it has manifested in recent years attempts to show the ways in which sado-humanism is predicated on a both representational and practical disavowal of nonhuman animal lives, experiences, intellects, and subjects in support of a wholly human theory and practice of subjectivity. This disavowal regularly leads to theoretical and real violence against animal others in characterizing them as less than humans and thus queer theories are complicit in supporting, or condoning, speciesist institutions that cause enormous suffering. Queer theories have increasingly discussed the necropolitics of society and life, beginning with a Foucauldian engagement with biopolitics all the way to calls for the symbolic death of reproductive futurism (Edelman 2004, Giffney 2008). Moreover, these queer theories have maintained there are ways of engaging with the question of the binary of life/death as it intersects with questions of legibility and a queer ethics of representation as they figure into the lives of different subjects who fall outside structures of heteronormative and reproductive power. On the issues of political practice, life, and ontology, certain queer theories and my explication of a feminist animal studies liberation may have theoretical common ground upon which to form what I call animal-attentive queer theories that

engage with both the practice and ethics of representation, mattering, and subjectivity.

One of the shared questions of inquiry between queer theories and animal studies is the problem of ‘speaking for’ the other. In queer theory, speaking for others can be considered a serious rhetorical violence against queer subjects. Queer populations have historically been silenced and labeled as pathological as a means of control by privileged populations in the name of heteronormativity. Queer struggles for public/private space, voice, and recognition place an extreme emphasis on reclaiming the ability to speak for themselves (however discordant that might be) within a pervasively heteronormative society as a means of accessing visibility, life, and safe spaces. Claiming a certain queer space has been extremely influential in allowing queer populations means of exchange, pleasure, and communicating desires without fear of imminent or probable violence/death. The politics and ethics of ‘speaking for’, ‘living with’, and ‘representing’ nonhuman animals and others is a central concern for many different scholars writing from a wide spectrum of fields under the animal studies heading. Within a feminist ethic of care for example, speaking for the animal’s right to a good life is a key political strategy in publicizing and ending the suffering that many animals face within the structures of factory farming and laboratory testing.

Most nonhuman animals do not speak or communicate through human language or symbolic systems. This creates a discursive silence/gap between humans and nonhuman others. There are many different ways in which writers and theorists have attempted to speak for and communicate with animal others based on a deeper engagement with individual others and more ethical relationships. Karen Barad offers her theoretical, scientific, and real relationship with Brittlestars, the class *Ophiuroidea*,

as a means of both engaging deeper communication and affecting an ‘ontoepistemological’ change in the way we relate with matter. She suggests that “brittlestars and their kin (both organic and inorganic, animate and inanimate) disrupt humanist and antihumanist assumptions about the nature of identity, performativity, agency and ethical practice” (Barad 2008, 335). Such an ethical entanglement and accounting with brittlestars “requires a radical rethinking of the nature of experience (for example, touch and vision), of theory, and their interrelationship, as well as many other core concepts that are still taken for granted by queer theorists” (Giffney 2008, 336). In Barad’s theoretical and practical engagement with brittlestars, she finds the very basis of such attempts are questioned by her relations to these nonhuman others that critique the ways in which nonhuman others lose their agency or ability to communicate with others in real and different ways. Motivated by her desire to critique the ethics of matter and the way cultural theorists have constructed nature within theory, Barad found the gap between humans and others diminishes through an account of the ways in which she interprets and relates to the ways brittlestars encounter the world, themselves and others. Discussions of an ethics of representation within animal-attentive queer theories remain problematic in that humans will always be the ones representing animals to other humans (at least in a written context) in a sort of critical but inevitable anthropomorphism, but more importantly these discussions illuminate the ways in which such a radical shift in ontology can effect change within our political practices. Such engagements with animal others leads to both changes in the account or representation of that other and the ways in which we can communicate or at least relate to animal others in ethical and meaningful ways.

The discussions of what is considered an ethical engagement with animal/others are widely varied. Some writers, such as Donna Haraway, focus on the type of relationship between human and other. Haraway's term companion species attempts to reformulate the way in which a liberal humanist engagement with animal others (subject and object) must be rethought as "relationships in which none of the partners pre-exist the relating and the relating is never done once and for all" (Haraway 2003, 12). Other writers, such as Lori Gruen, have theorized a change in the ways (as compared to the ontologies of the specific relationships) in which we engage with animal others. Gruen extends a practical ethics of engagement through her term entangled empathy in which reflection is a central means by which we, as humans, can begin to take into account the other's history, context, desires, and delimitating them through reflection from our own projections onto the other (Gruen 2011, 17). Through such a practice of reflection and engagement:

One must genuinely attempt to understand how the one being empathized with experiences the world and this requires gaining as much knowledge of the ways she lives. In the case of other animals, to empathize well, one must understand the individual's species-typical behaviors as well as her personality, and that is not easy to do without direct observation, over a period of time (Gruen 2011, 18).

These theoretical and practical interventions into the question of relating to and speaking for intersect with queer theories' reformulations of the politics of social signification and representation that remain central to political struggles against normative structures and spaces that continually disavow queer subjects and positions.

It should be noted that many animal-attentive queer writers tend not to take an either/or approach but a looser, less definitive politic of action. There seems to be no absolute answers or at least an avoidance of absolute ways and means through which

we engage with or speak for others in order to avoid reproducing that very same social violence. It is within this construction of (un)intelligible and non-absolutist positions/representations that I argue animal-attentive queer theories and effective politics can emerge. The basis of such theories would be an ethical double-bind or paradox of wanting/trying to help and an acknowledgement of the colonial implications that this type of care has taken historically. Unlike Spivack's characterization of the double bind as a singularity with no room inside or position from which to work, I wish to propose an opening within this paradox that is the vital and only place from which a practical politics can come. There are five ethical theorists whose writings can positively inform a (re)engagement with this imminent paradox.

Their work provides the contextual framework through which I have constructed an animal-attentive queer theory. Four writers and theorists (as well as those who engage with their writing) have been specifically and identifiably important in motivating me to consider this problem of bringing together two seemingly disparate fields of engagements, commitments and conclusions. The first is the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari on assemblages, becoming and specifically their concept of 'becoming-animal'. The second is Claire Colebrook's work on vitalism, Foucault, Deleuze and how his writing calls on queer theory to reevaluate what a Deleuzian queer theory would look like with what it would engage. The third is Karen Barad's work on intra-activity, entanglement and her concepts of agential realism, ontology and an ethics of mattering. The fourth is Elizabeth Grosz's work on Nietzsche, forces and a (re)engagement with the ways in which matter comes to matter. And finally, Lori Gruen's concept of entangled empathy as a political tool from animal-attentive

queer politics can give meaning to, and promote ethical change. These powerful inspirations allow me to propose at least the beginnings of what animal-attentive queer theories would look like and be concerned with along with certain ethical and core values.

*Becoming/Becoming-Animal: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari*

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notion of becoming (extended from Nietzsche's invocation of becoming rather than being) provides a crucial change in the ways through which subjects can be considered/represented and theorized. Becoming provides an analytic that is in distinction to the static identity of being. The performative being (within queer theory) is a process of iterative mimesis to produce an understandable, representative, coherent identity—namely sexuality. However “becoming is not a correspondence between relations...to become is not to progress or regress along a series” (Deleuze, Guattari in Calarco 2004, 87). Deleuze and Guattari stress that becoming is not a chain of identities performed towards a *telos* and as Butler describes with the fantasy of copying a nonexistent original. The notion of communal recognition or static identity is what Deleuze and Guattari identify as the imaginary component of the subject or relation because “becoming produces nothing by filiation” (Deleuze, Guattari in Calarco 2004, 88). Filiation is the notion of a blood-line, genetic inheritance, or family structure providing an imaginary basis for which community and connection are formed. From this idea, Deleuze and Guattari draw a very precise connection between reproductive futurism/normativity and the notion of filiation-based models of subjectivity and intelligibility. Then the theory of becoming is at odds with a performative theory of being in that that becoming is (at least it has

the potential in my reading to be) a theory of reality but more a queer description of reality/the real. Deleuze and Guattari argue that “becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes” or the end point of being, identity, or producing something already known (Deleuze, Guattari in Calarco 2004, 87). What is real is not the matrix through which the terms of the becoming are understood but rather that which becomes—more accurately that which is (always) becoming.

Deleuze and Guattari’s analytic of becoming-animal provides a means through which this process can be understood as a description of the real through specific nonorganic forces rather than being animal, human, normative. Becoming-animal is the counting of many agential forces within the process by which a subject becomes into reality. A focus on the “radical multiplicity” of the process of becoming-animal as a process that produces a not necessarily stable identity that is nonetheless identifiable in every becoming (Deleuze, Guattari in Calarco 2004, 87). As creative process, Deleuze and Guattari view becoming-animal as a means of “traversing human beings and sweeping them away, affecting the animal no less than the human” which stands in contrast to the post-humanist treatments of the human as that which came before rather than without. As Kari Weil has noted Deleuze and Guattari’s “notion of ‘becoming-animal’...is an attempt to undo accepted and recognizable definitions of the human by replacing notions of exterior form and function with those of affects, intensities, and flows of movement as means to describe and value life” (Weil 2010, 11). The notions of filiation and reproductive futurity or at least ‘beings’

lies within what Deleuze and Guattari term the imaginary. James Urpeth argues that “mimetic acts presuppose derivative phenomena such as species-identity, self-identity, literal language, the *telos* of heterosexual adulthood” (Deleuze, Guattari in Calarco 2004, 102). Deleuze and Guattari employ the notion of “alliance” and assemblage as the matter of concerns rather than filiation and community (side-stepping tropes of reproductive futurity as a *necessary* condition) as the means by which we can better understand realities in its many ruptures, unaccountable events, or imperceptible moments (Deleuze, Guattari in Calarco 2004, 88).

Becoming-animal can be thought of as a refocusing of attention to the ways in which subjects become out of an imminent virtual plane already in relation to each as reality. Rather than a performative fantasy that entails a sado-humanist logic in the (re)producing a recognizable identity towards or from a community of beings in which identity and recognition are necessarily based on a language/languageless binary. The project of performativity is the production of subjects with identities. Such a binary within Butler’s theory of performatively produced identity is part of a sado-humanist logic that disavows (human) languageless animals in an attempt to delineate between object and subject by and for human exceptionalism. It is within this sado-humanist disavowal that the experience and importantly the suffering of animal others is lost within a queer analysis. Becoming-animal does not call a witness to the becoming rather recognizes the social imaginaries by which the real can clash with but how the agential forces are not those who are but rather all that has become or is becoming. It is important to recognize that becoming-animal is a creative process of engagement with our own attempts at becoming-animal but the ways in which our becomings as humans are blocked from certain symbioses with other becomings

around us—in all their organic and nonorganic agencies. For Deleuze and Guattari, affect should only be anti-human. Becoming-animal relies on movement, intensity, and affect as integral to the formation of alliances and legibility rather than a theory of recognition based on the reproduction of linguistically related, ‘singular’ subjects.

Becoming-animal prompts a deterritorialization of the borders of what is recognizable into a descriptive processing of reality and the multiple becomings within everything. Citing the example of the orchid who’s reproductive apparatus becomes as orchid-wasp but “from which no wasp-orchid can ever descend,” becoming-animal calls to attention the agential reality that extends beyond the reproduction of self/other (Deleuze, Guattari in Calarco 2004, 88). Descriptions of performative mimesis (filiation-based community) and reproduction are disavowed from what Deleuze and Guattari call reality or the real. Deleuze and Guattari are proposing a theory or radical ontology rather than a theory of subjectivity or being. Becomings concern reality and recognizing how things are as they are. What is important then is the way that “such phenomena are...less real than ‘becoming-animal’ whose ontological primordially” Deleuze and Guattari are concerned with bring to bear upon theories of social structure or subjectivity. There is no ‘map’ for Deleuze and Guattari. The rhetoric of becoming-animal displaces parts of the self-defeating logic within queer theories through the positivity and promiscuity within such an ethics of representation that does not start with or rely on the ‘Human’. In such relations we as humans can navigate a critical anthropomorphism within our representations of important affective connections and communications with animal others. The aim of such an intervention into queer theories is to create an opening for possibilities to become outside of a relation that demands discursive recognition from the other. This

theoretical move is a widening of both the ontology and the ways a queer ontology is formed/represented by focusing on the carrying and encountering of other who is unlike 'me'. Becoming-animal provides a means of creative description that the symbiosis can be recognized not as a calling on the other as witness but becoming itself, our self, ourselves, themselves with no imitative restrictions or aspirations.

*A Truly Queer Theory: Claire Colebrook*

Claire Colebrook's work synthesizes Deleuze's writings as a means of assessing the very existence of queer theories. A Deleuzian queer theory would "challenge the supposed neutrality or undifferentiated nature of life" which Colebrook argues is a notion that "underpins the Western image of *theoria*" (Colebrook 2009, 23). Following Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming-animal, Colebrook is concerned with the relatively static nature of matter as the object upon which culture is practiced or performed to produce subjects and named objects. Essentially, Colebrook argues a 'true' queer theory would not only reconfigure the inorganic as agential but that which also mattered within blocks of becoming. Comparing Butler's model of theory to that which Colebrook reads emerging from Deleuze's work, she suggests that:

whereas Butler's model of theory is to begin with the subject and then interrogate its conditions of possibility in the tension between recognition and autonomy, Deleuze's theory is one of positive intuition. Here, we go beyond composed selves and problems to the affects and intensities from which they are organized. For Butler a queer theory is one in which the conditions of being a subject are essentially queer – one must claim to speak as a self, but can do so only through an other who is *not* oneself. At the same time, the condition for being queer is being a [able-bodied human] subject: one must be recognized as having a claim to speak, be and exist...For Deleuze, the conditions of the queer and the conditions of the new are the same: to counter-actualize the present, to repeat the intensities and counters that have composed us, but not as they are *for* us (Colebrook 2009, 20).

Colebrook presents a queer theory that produces explanations of subjectivity, sexuality, and normativity; a theory that presents reality and specifically life/the present as a set of problems that are counter-actualized by a focus on affect and intensities rather than identifying an already present subject.

Queer theories then would not be concerned with the political power of theoretical engagements of subjectivity as performatively produced but rather with the world as problem entrenched in multiple modes of relations and positive differences. The world should be theorized as a “world of divergent lines of relationality, where forces intersect to produce qualities and quantities without the ground of good sense and common sense” (Giffney 2009, 29). Colebrook argues for a literal theoretical reorientation (from queer studies to a [Deleuzian] queer theory) towards that which is “queer, not in the sense of constant destabilization or contradiction, but in the opening itself up to problems” (Giffney 2009, 29). Most importantly “the task of theory is to take this form or Idea of difference – that we begin not with substances or subjects but potentialities for problematic relations – and create a new mode of thinking, thought liberated from the image” (Giffney 2009, 29). Colebrook specifically uses the word task to avoid a queer utopian description of its political *telos* but rather a constant reengagement or becoming of theory that took like on its terms its potentials rather than identifying subjects and consequently nonsubjects in need of subjectivity.

One can recognize the ways in which certain engagements with nonhuman animals have fallen into this either/or logic of human or not that I described as the self-defeating logic of queer theories. Colebrook provides a way making a queer theories that are do not need transformation or creation of new subjects—say posthumanist subjectivities rather than liberal (sado-)humanist ones. More

importantly truly queer theories can be engagements with the potentialities of life to create problems and the ways in which these problems present possibilities for thinking beyond the image and becoming real. The ethics of mattering within such queer theories is open rather than closed to that which is not human.

*Entanglements of Matter: Karen Barad*

Karen Barad offers conceptual reworking of a natural science-attentive ethics of matter and representation based on lessons from quantum mechanics to describe an agential realism as an inspiration for changing the ways we engage with matter. First Barad rhetorically modifies interaction “which presumes the prior existence of independent-specific entities or relata” to intra-action as a means of describing the “specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the components of phenomena become determinate and that particular concepts...become meaningful” (Barad 2007, 139). Barad’s shift from inter to intra allows a reworking of the seemingly *a priori* terms of the engagement that should not be considered static but always entangled in relation as a means of mattering. She argues this shift signals a larger ontological shift:

The primary ontological units are not ‘things’ but phenomena—dynamic topological reconfigurings/entanglements/relationalities/(re)articulations of the world. And the primary semantic units are not ‘words’ but material-discursive practices through which (ontic and semantic) boundaries are constituted. This dynamism is agency. Agency is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfigurations of the world. The universe is agential intra-activity in its becoming (Barad 2007, 141).

Barad draws such theoretical conclusions from the potential effects she observes the scientific understanding of the quantum world can have on the way we observe, understand, and represent the world with our ‘natural’ human senses. Quantum

mechanics describe the quantum world—molecules, atoms, electrons and other subatomic particles. The quantum world is driven and understood through statistically based models of action and potential. On a quantum scale the effects of different kinds of energy (vibrational, rotational, translational, electronic, etc.) all have a greater effect on the outcomes/actions/fates of singular particles. For example in a quantum world a singular entity (the electron) can interact and move itself in isolation but in a larger scale a tennis ball does not suddenly fling itself over a net without the applied force of a racquet to hit it over. Scientifically speaking (one could say of ‘facts’ or realities) the rules or probabilities of the quantum world little or no meaning for larger ‘Newtonian’ systems, e.g. cells, tennis balls, cars, bodies. The metaphor-based shift in her engagement with matter does not necessarily have a reality in effecting change in political or ethical practice. However, Barad’s reworking of the ethics of representation and matter can (and should) nonetheless be significant in their implication within animal-attentive queer theories.

A material-discursive practice would force a queer and feminist conversation with scientific theories as possible theories of matter rather than based on patriarchal structures of power and vice versa. Barad argues that we should think more about the ways we construct our ontologies within the entangled connections of our lives rather than falsely observing life from a supposedly objective and God-like position. She suggest that “it is symptomatic of a widespread predilection, shared by post-structuralist, feminist and queer theorists, as well as more traditional theorists, for presuming that causality and agency need to be thought and rethought once again in terms of the human...what is needed is a queering of queer conceptions of causality and agency” (Giffney 2008, 313). Specifically the agency of a material world or what

she calls a dynamism is agentially important within feminist conversations as well as the discursive reworkings signaled by a feminist and queer ontology that is engaged with the natural sciences. From a feminist or queer perspective that prescribes to such a sado-humanism “the constitutive outside – the nonhuman, in its entanglement with the inhuman, the differentially human, and the otherwise than human – haunts these accounts that think and rethink causality in terms of the human field of human sociality and processes of subjection” (Giffney 2008, 313). Barad, coming from a quantum-based empiricism (mainly Neils Bohr’s writing on experiment/experimenter realism and entanglement), is able to make ontologically significant conclusions that leave feminism/queer theories as much untouched as the natural sciences. For example, Barad argues “diffraction is a material-discursive phenomenon that challenges the presumed inherent separability of subject and object, nature and culture, fact and value, human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic, epistemology and ontology, materiality and discursivity” (Barad 2007, 381). Referencing the ontological lessons seen within a brittlestar’s sensory structure, she notes “*Diffraction is not about any difference but about what differences matter*. The brittlestar lives agential separability, the possibilities for differentiation without in individuation” (Giffney 2008, 328). Her list of supposed separabilities leaves little untouched as in need of (re)examination in the specific ways that experiments, conversations, theories, representations, problems, and engagements are structured. In a very immediate sense Barad’s can and should change the ways animal-attentive queer theories includes and analysis of an entangled suffering beyond the human and the ways we engage with all organic and inorganic others.

At the end of *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Barad uses her metaphorical extension of quantum mechanics-based conclusions to call for a new ethics of mattering that re(con)figures, using her word, many feminist, queer, and natural science assumptions and practices. Without explicitly referencing Deleuze or Foucault, she argues that “differentiation is not about radical exteriority but rather agential separability. Differentiation is...about making connections and commitments.” (Barad 2007, 392). Differentiation in Barad’s formulation has direct connections to Deleuze’s becoming-animal as a process of symbiosis and alliance based on commitment rather than filiation into specific (reproductive) groupings. She argues then that an “ethics [of mattering] is therefore not about right response to a radically exterior/ized other, but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming of which we are a part” which can be said to be a consequence of assemblage-based engagement with ‘others’ (Barad 2007, 393). For Barad, a queer/feminist ethics of representation could be said instead to consequently be an ethics of engagement.

Coming from an engagement with the isomorphism paradoxes of quantum mechanics Barad extends the results into a metaphor for a new means of understanding our effect or entanglement on/with another not as ending at our parting or beginning at our encounter but, similar to Deleuze/Guattari, constitutive of life in a world with others. Barad concludes through a mixing of feminist and scientific rhetoric that “meeting each moment, being alive to the possibilities of becoming, is an ethical call, an invitation that is written into the very matter of all being and becoming” (Barad 2007, 396). While in many ways these ethics are not of immediate political concern, Barad’s re(con)figurations of ethics if applied do have

serious material-discursive consequences. A example could be that while a vibrational change in a particle can have serious quantum consequences, say a phase or energetic change, for a different particle within an isolated system ('two bonded atoms'), a table that is overturned and hits the ground does not cause the government within that isolated system ('the nation') to come falling down as well. Barad's ethics of mattering provides a context and structure through which the problems of becoming are brought to the forefront in an entangled 'ontopistemology'. By taking Barad's ethical invocation seriously, animal-attentive queer theories can begin to matter through important intra-actions and entangled commitments while providing new means of thinking through interlocking social structures and hierarchies of power that extend beyond previously anthropocentric questions, theories and models.

*The Representational Potential of Forces: Elizabeth Grosz*

Elizabeth Grosz provides a lens through which the problems and material ethical engagements of Barad's agential realism and Deleuze's becoming can engaged multiple bodies of knowledge, agencies, and modes of existence that do not end in a queer representational ethics of absolute certainty. She opens that "no text or position is without problems, contradictions, weaknesses, points of uneasiness. I have tried to develop an affirmative method, a mode of assenting rather than dissenting from those 'primary' texts" (Grosz 2005, 3). The acknowledgement of those contradictions, commitments, assumptions, and biases seem to be sufficient for an affirmative concurrent engagement with material from the natural sciences, philosophers deemed misogynist or racist by certain feminists, to more radical and cultural theorists. Grosz sees an affirmative approach within political projects achieved through:

acknowledging and welcoming an exploration of their own ontological commitments, open themselves up to a new direction or orientation, not inconsistent with various struggles for rights and equalities, but moving beyond them: an indeterminable direction, beyond planning and control in the present, that makes all plans at best provisional, open to revisions, and always in the process of transformation. It opens up feminist and other political struggles to what is beyond current comprehension and control, to becoming unrecognizable, becoming other, becoming artistic (Grosz 2005, 5).

By invoking a Deleuzian rhetoric Grosz proposes an ethical engagement and readings that do not necessarily end in a defined *telos* but are framed by the terms engaged and a commitment to becoming unrecognizable and out of control. Animal-attentive queer theories are not paralyzed by contradictions within such an queer ethics of representation given such a material-discursive project is politically suggestive and not prescriptive within an ethics of practice. Without a doubt Grosz affirmative model of reading is a socially dangerous argument in terms of power, privilege, violence, and death but necessarily recognizes that an absolutist ethics of representation never tends to do what it promises.

Grosz goes beyond a politics of unintelligibility and furthers the antihumanist drive through what she argues is a necessary reengagement with the matter of force. She proposes the “outline of an ontology, not of *subjects* and their *desires*, but of *forces* and *actions* which produce subjects and pleasures as their crystallized forms” reemphasizing the reality of becoming as our necessary focus (Grosz 2005, 186).

Grosz reformulates the subject as forces, varying in magnitude (direction and strength), explicitly disavowing a masculinist understanding of force coming only from the strong but rather difference as intra-actions between forces that produce recognizable and differing actions (Barad would say within different phenomena).

Drawing upon Nietzsche’s discussion of wills and intentions, Grosz argues that “force

needs to be understood in its full subhuman and superhuman resonances: as *the inhuman* which both makes the human possible and at the same time positions the human within a world where force works in spite of and around the human, within and as the human” (Grosz 2005, 187). Within this antihumanist ontoepistemology, force becomes an important way in which different intra-actions can be understood in becoming. Metaphorically and generally, that the force of an action on you or me may be slight but great on another, can be explained in terms of the differences within the magnitudes of our forces and becomings rather than politics, subjectivities, or identities which remain crystallized within a process of reproductive and intelligible signification.

Such a rhetorical shift towards affirmative readings of writings in a variety of fields, including scientific papers in the natural sciences, can lead to an increase in common ground between a feminist animal studies and queer theories. As a consequence feminist, queer, and other political struggles may gain a greater reality in acknowledging “the pre-personal forces at work in activities of sexed bodies, institutions and social practices. These forces, these micro-agencies, ensure that sexuality and identity itself, are fundamentally mosaic-like fields composed of aligned but disparate elements, energies, goals, wills” (Grosz 2005, 195). While acknowledging the significance of a sort of strategic essentialism, Grosz argues that there is political and ethical important in acknowledging that within different becomings, assemblages, and alliances there are a “multiplicity of disparate yearnings, interests, orientations, unified at this historical moment” through different (restrictively recognized) social identifications (Grosz 2005, 195). Through the rhetoric of force, ethical engagement with practical problems can move beyond (rather debilitated and useless) all-inclusive

theories of life towards a sort of passive vitalism within queer and animal-attentive critiques and forms of representations that recognize forces which at once pre-exist and construct in their many differences and micro-organizations.

### *Entangled Empathy*

Concerned by what she reads as a vitalist move within certain strains of animal studies and material feminists, Gruen proposes the practice of entangled empathy. She notes that “one of the central insights of material feminism is that we are already in relations with all sorts of life forms and, for the most part, we have not been recognizing this [fact]” (Gruen 2011, 14). However, the seeming vitalism within material feminisms or an equal acknowledgment, recognition, and value of all organics and life does not speak to the fact that “our relations to other organisms are varied and the meaning and significance of particular relations also varies...not all relations are ethically equivalent” (Gruen 2011, 15). The vitalist impulse within material feminism and some animal studies, Gruen contends, can do little more than provide an “epistemic anchor” from which different modes of recognition can be built but can only be suggestive and should not be prescriptive of a practical and ethical response to the lives of others. The entangled relations acknowledged within such a material feminist, and I would argue within animal-attentive queer theories, is “meant to focus our ‘sensitivity and awareness’ rather than to guide our actions” (Gruen 2011, 15). One can feel deep shame or grief over the destruction of ecosystems or old growth in that it is contrary to an internal ethical system that placed value upon environmental harmony and sustainability. However, such an engagement, Gruen argues, is done on the level of projection and metaphor and not on the level of an

empathetic engagement with the trees, rivers, or organisms that exist outside a mindedness analogical to that of humans. Entangled empathy then provides a means of being in direct ethical relation as an attempt to understand the perspective, loss, suffering, and experiences of certain animal others.

Gruen contends that being motivated towards being in relation to others should involve a practice of empathy as a way to be in good ethical relation. She suggests that “being in ethical relation involves, in part, being able to understand and respond to another’s needs, interests desires, vulnerabilities, hopes, perspectives, etc. not by positing, from one’s own point of view, what they might or should be” (Gruen 2011, 17). To avoid a vitalist-based entanglement with all life Gruen argues that “while everyone is entangled with particular others and to some extent the various forms and forces of life, not recognizing that there is a particular embodied being who organizes her perceptions and attitudes can be problematic” within, I argue, a practical ethical and political context. One must in this way speak of individuals, lives, singularly embodied experiences to become legible in political and common discussions, rhetoric, and debate. Putting aside the many critiques of academic privilege, to speak of ontoepistemological frameworks that describe the ways in which constructed boundaries obscure the reality of the intra-connected where relations flow one subject into another without break would be to make one’s self politically illegible. We must, in Gruen’s view, be able to recognize embodied individuality due to the extreme political and real life/death consequences at stake. Empathy then “is a way of connecting to specific others in their particular circumstances and thus is a central skill for being in ethical relations” (Gruen 2011, 17).

The process of entangled empathy moves from the recognition of others to the essential oscillation between one's own view and that of the other. First "entangled empathy is a process whereby individuals who are empathizing with others first respond to the other's condition (most likely, but not exclusively by way of a pre-cognitive empathetic reactions)" (Gruen 2011, 17). Then from "these reactions, we move to reflectively imagine ourselves in the position of the other, and then make a judgment about how the conditions that she finds herself in may contribute to her perceptions or state of mind and impact her interest" (Gruen 2011, 17). A common pitfall is the projection of one's own desire or emotional states onto that of the other. In a bad form of anthropomorphizing, we can do harm to an animal or misread its situation by projecting our beliefs and commitments onto the lives of others. For example, Haraway in a moment of failed entangled empathy reads an agency onto the nature of Oncomouse as made to want to submit to the suffering and harm of painful and torturous drug trials and vivisection. Gruen contends that the "alternation between the first and third person points-of-view will minimize narcissistic projections" such as within the previous Haraway example (Gruen 2011, 18). If we take up the movement from first to third person perspective we can understand Haraway's failure: the perspective and interests of Oncomouse are silenced, illegible or at least ignored. Moved for a multitude of reasons, "entangled empathy involves the empathizer directly and is thus motivating" in that is in all likelihood if done completely and correctly will leave the empathizer to attempt to end the distress or suffering of the other being empathized with (Gruen 2011, 19).

The process of entangled empathy is a practice that leads to the action of the empathizer on behalf of the other being empathized with in an effort to end or

attempt to the end the suffering, domination or oppression of the other. Gruen notes that “entangled empathy as [she] is construing it involves both affect and cognition and will necessitate action” (Gruen 2011, 19). Clearly then in animal-attentive queer politics such a framework involves an ability to realize the suffering of others through different processes, maybe to incomplete ends, but in the end be moved to take action no matter what. Such a process “requires those of us empathizing to attend to things we might not have others (much as the material feminists would have us do) and figure out how to better navigate difference” (Gruen 2011, 19). In this way animal attentive queer theories can affect the ways we entangle empathetically with others in our ability to recognize the suffering of others through our emphasis on material relation and connection. Gruen’s ethics of entangled empathy provides a practical basis for what I call animal-attentive queer politics:

Entangled empathy requires gaining wisdom and perspective and, importantly, motivates the empathizer to act ethically. [She suggests] that entangled empathy with other animals is a form of moral attention that focuses our perception of the claims they make on us, help us to reorient our ethical sensibilities and overcome the limitations that standard humanist responses pose. It is also an ethical skill that can assist us in navigating various forms of human difference, a skill that in our violent world still needs to be taken up and thoughtfully honed. (Gruen 2011, 19).

### *Animal Attentive Queer Theories*

While namely a model of quantum reality, I argue that Barad’s concept of intra-active entanglement begins to describe a way in which we as taxonified human subjects can think through the question of a animal-attentive queer ethics of critique, mattering, and engagement that can be suggestive towards shaping a good ethical practice/politics. Acknowledging our becomings, alliances, and entangled naturecultures an animal-attentive queer politics can and should emerge from a focus

on the forces of alliance rather than the identities of the members involved. We are situated within a society that promotes factory farming, extinction politics, deforestation, environmental degradation, and abusive human-animal domestic relations all stemming from consumer demand, affective detachment, and the political invisibility of our agential entanglement with others.

Death is a reality of life. Drawing upon feminist and multicultural animal studies I argue it is important to begin to understand the ways in which our lives are enmeshed or entangled with the lives of others—human and nonhuman. While life remains a human material-discursive construct and symbol, the work of an ethics of representation within animal-attentive queer theories begins to recognize the unknowable experiences, perspectives, practically spoken for subjectivity of others as markers of other life and individuality. Discussions of death as a ‘natural’ fate or even a sacrifice are entrenched within Christain-salvation rhetoric that remains relatively uncritiqued outside of certain science studies, animal rights and ecofeminist writings. The representation and acknowledgement of that life belonging to an individual with moral value rather than an instrumental or invisible mortality is an important component of effecting political change. This sort of attention is reminiscent of Zipporah Weisberg’s critique of Haraway. Weisberg notes that Haraway problematically divorces her representations of animal lives from a liberationist politics in favor of a practice that supports meat eating and animal suffering within the laboratory. Within Haraway’s queer framework she is able to justify the killing of animal others necessarily while attending to the emotions and affects such an action has upon the research or us, the observers of such suffering. Haraway’s concept of ‘shared suffering’ serves little purpose beyond a sado-humanist logic where animals

always die in the name of human life, will power, and happiness. Within animal-attentive queer theories, such an engagement with animal others is necessarily oppressive in the logics of human normativity that place the nonhuman as the structure to uplift, define, and benefit the power of human subjectivity.

Judith Butler and her politics of mourning have attempted to realize the sphere of life and grievable life should be extended to others (Butler 2005). Her engagement has mainly been to extend recognition to human others who are disavowed within American media outlets and popular discourse (such as terrorist prisoners and radical, religious others). Many animal studies writers and recently Butler herself have argued that such a model can and should be applied to the lives of animal others. Butler states:

we are reciprocally exposed and invariably dependent, not only on others, but on a sustained and sustainable environment. Humanity seems to be a kind of defining ontological attribute...But what if our ontology has to be thought otherwise? If humans actually share a condition of precariousness, not only just with one another, but also with animals, and with the environment, then this constitutive feature of who we 'are' undoes the very conceit of anthropomorphism. IN this sense, I want to propose 'precarious life' as a non-anthropocentric framework for considering what makes life valuable (Butler in Stanescu 2011).

An extension of 'precarious life' to animal others, if taken seriously, would theoretically turn butcher shops and meat isles at grocery stores into halls of death (Stanescu 2011). Grieving peoples would then be compelled into ethical veganism in a grief-stricken attempt to improve to the lives and experiences of animals. Killing and eating animal others in such representation would incite grief and feelings akin to current reactions to murder, sociopathy, and cannibalism. I think it can be reasonably said that most people would agree, for different reasons that such practices are ethically wrong. In such a total acknowledgement of grievable life of animal others

factory farming, animal testing, puppy mills, and other institutions based in animal suffering, exploitation, and death would end on the basis that they incited widespread grief and were ethically unjustifiable. Such a consequence would be in line with a politics of animal liberation so it could be said Butler's theory of a shared 'precarious life' between humans and others has the potential to be politically powerful.

However, I argue that this type of animal liberation critique can benefit from animal-attentive queer theories in acknowledging the affective entanglements within different cultural contexts. Some people really enjoy eating meat, enjoy the smells of cooking meat or a kitchen table being set in preparation for a meal, or the memories of a family coming together to share a favorite meat dish compels them to cook it again. It seems to me then the call for an ethical veganism or some kind of stricter non-animal diet on the basis of grief alone will not change the actions of many, fall on deaf ears, or possibly incite angered others to eat more meat, hunt more fiercely, or carry out even more gruesome acts of violence against animal others. I call this a contextual error because it fails to recognize a contextual-historical bind of many who would be the target of such calls. Animal-attentive queer theories must recognize or at least attempt to recognize the claims made upon us by other animals fully as well as develop the context and claims expressing familial and agential desires that have real consequences for animal others in a multicultural and queer representation.

Queer theories have historically developed expansive and instructive critiques of ethics or politics committed to (normative) rights such as activism to end Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT), the United States government's military policy banning gay and lesbian soldiers from serving openly in the military, as a political commitment that harms queer people who fall outside such normative (Duggan 1994). Duggan

argues that the “production of a politics from a fixed identity position privileges those for whom that position is the primary or only marked identity” (Duggan 1994, 10). The harm or even erasure of queer lives within this example supposedly identity-based politics could be paralleled with the divorce of animal value and life that is accomplished through the production of meat for human consumption and pleasure. Both desires (for gay visibility and meat) are predicated upon a harm of an object other. Acknowledging the sado-humanism of such a queer argument against the activism to end DADT, which inadvertently support a human exceptionalism and militant nationalism, the theoretical critique and framework against normativity could be applied to a politics of grief that goes beyond the human. Animal-attentive queer theories has the critical potential with say the inclusion of both Duggan’s critique of activism against DADT and Butler’s theory of ‘precarious life’ to achieve an queerly animal representation of the overlapping harms of both a human normative queer politics and the ramifications of producing and eating meat through the ways these interlocking theoretical and practical framework can effect and intra-act with one another. This theoretical and practical way animal-attentive queer theories, as illustrated in the previous example, can make interventions into animal studies as a means of negotiating these multicultural/valent questions where an absolute queer or animal liberation politics of enforcement can often do more damage than any material good.

While certain queer theories maintains its resistance to animals in what I have called a self-defeating logic, a feminist animal studies liberation necessarily moves beyond the rationalist or absolutist animal liberation models that collapsed animal and human-animal experience through the use of anthropocentric politics. It is in

relation to one another that I see animal-attentive queer theories emerge as a means of not only (re)conceptualizing the framework in which we think through and write on queer matters but also more practically pushing a seeming standstill between animal liberationists and ‘devout’ meat eaters. The less visible/implicit reluctance that certain academics/activist may feel towards the calls for an intersectional analysis that includes those beyond the human species is addressed in the ethics of representation, engagement and mattering within the framework of animal-attentive queer theories. Academic work, especially work that draws upon queer theories, must acknowledge the myriad ways such entanglements are erased from view in a human-exceptionalist attempt at definition, borders, instrumentality, and oppression.

In a similar move to Haraway’s construction of the term ‘natureculture’ to describe the reality of the situation but also the theoretically/historically constructed categories of difference, my attempt at animal-attentive queer theories is undergirded by a commitment to animal others, queer commitments to the desires and pleasures of others, and an attempt at bringing into conversation seemingly disparate academic traditions in hopes of beginning to tackle a multi-situated intra-action. I wish not to erase the historical opposition between these fields by smashing them together in a rhetorical and material flourish but rather acknowledge their developments as fields of inquiry. There are present and future possibilities in moments of cooperation and alliance over serious problems with practical, material-discursive consequences within animal-attentive queer theories. This sort of bestial politics and theory would work against binaries and a maintain a commitment to non-absolutes, unintelligibility, and representations that do not always satisfy but rather, to borrow phrasing from Kari Weil, in an imperfect and always partial knowledge attempt to engage more fully and

enhance the lives of all animals, ourselves included. Stressing a sort of woundedness within my theories and accepting of the contradictions, paradoxes, uninhabitable positionalities, and becomings not only provide a framework that necessarily calls for self-critique and opening to others but also to the fluid, fleshy, and needed and differential attention to the agential realist entanglement of recognizable and differently characterized life, coming death, and the our inevitable, preexisting, and shared intensities (*pathos*).

By presenting both a fairly clear practical and political framework in the way of a practice of entangled empathy and the theoretical impact animal-attentive queer theories can have in the realm of an animal-attentive queer ethics of representation, I want to stress the differential attention such theories can change our academic and individualized practice for the better. Entangled empathy is a way of dealing practically with the political and everyday problems facing animal-attentive queer theories by providing a guide to action. This model provides the openings into the ways the ethics of mattering, entanglement, and representation can and should effect our ethical practices. In a move away from a strict definition mindedness and its analogues that seems to undergird some theories of empathy, entangled empathy allows for the opening up to difference farther and farther away from the human based on our individual abilities rather than a foundational ethics or value system. Gruen in a moment of autobiography suggests that the “reason [she] can’t connect [with any and all life] is because it isn’t possible to be in direct *ethical* relation to ecosystems or organisms that exist in ways I can’t imagine, beyond metaphor or projection, what it is like to be like” (Gruen 2011, 17). She recognizes limits to our imagination, or ability to imagine what it is like to be like by acknowledging her

personal partial, situated knowledge and imperfection. While her connection to insects may be ‘thin’, it does not necessitate that others feel the same way and could feel empathetically motivated to act ethically on behalf of insect others. Entangled empathy allows that we all have different limits in our abilities and sets up this limit to attempt to move beyond it. This emphasis, however, on the limit of different human imaginations does not excuse or permit empathetic failure by focusing on the limit.

Animal-attentive queer theories in this way continues the feminist and queer commitments against a binary opposition between theory and practice. Recall my story with walking Fuzzy and the ways in which I was better able to empathize with and care for his experiences by accurately delineating between my narcissistic impulses for complete animal liberation and his inability to properly navigate a violently human symbolic world. Empathy is an important political tool for the effecting of on-the-ground changes in the lives of individuals animals we encounter in our different and particular contexts. The movements between theory and practice should not be read as oppositional commitments, leading to the formation of a theory/practice binary, but rather differential attentions to the multitude of problematic forces and concerns within animal-attentive queer theories. Critiques of normativity and hierarchy within animal-attentive queer theories provide a context for and means of disrupting the norms of judgments placed in the rhetoric of ‘limits’ and ‘metaphors’ in the connection we feel as potential empathizers to animal others, human lives, or the world in general that lie far outside the purview of a human or culturally situated mindedness. As a community we should value the differences in emphasis and perspective we can cultivate through our becomings with others and the movements, rather than opposition, between theory and practice.

## Conclusion

I want to touch upon the immediately present possibilities and changes within animal-attentive queer theories. Specifically I wish to comment on the methodological and affective structures within animal-attentive queer theories that produce ethical practices of thinking, representations, actions, matterings, our becomings together and relations to one another.

### *Affirmative Readings, Positivity, and Doing Theories*

Grosz's model of affirmative readings should be central to such theories. The self-reflexive critique as well as critical and contextual engagement with writings is essential to a politics that combines a queer sentimentality, contextual feminist animal liberation, and potentiality for symmetrical connections or relations beyond species—beyond the organic. Grosz contends that she has “tried to develop an affirmative method, a mode of assenting rather than dissenting from those ‘primary’ texts...one can write most generously and with the most inspiration working on those texts one loves the most intensely, which have had the most direct impact on one. The rest, those one deems too problematic, can be left aside” (Grosz 2005, 3). Within animal-attentive queer theories we should reject for example Haraway's move to argue Deleuze and Guattari as ‘The Enemy’ of feminist animal or science studies and instead affirmatively engage with their theories of becoming. The attention to Deleuze and Guattari that I outlined within with the theoretical framework for animal-attentive queer theories can serve as a model for other affirmative reading. The theories of becoming and becoming-animal are inspiring in their ability to focus on

the differing intensities, affect, and desire within life. Affirmative readings of Deleuze move beyond the performatively-produced subject: “Asserting with Guattari that we should ‘become-animal’, [Deleuze] conceives of the human subject not as a given but as formed through a process which should be unfixed and denaturalized in order that we might become all that we can be via counteractualisation” (Sullivan 2009, 90-1). Therefore it is possible to think through such theories in ways that are not or even against sexist, homophobic, speciesist or racist readings. This restructuring further opens and produces animal-attentive queer imaginations and representations in theory, practice and our relations that transcend sado-humanist logic. These types of engagements would not be possible without such an affirmative model of reading.

The notion of positivity provides an underlying and productive force within the formation of communities based on alliance rather than filiation and reproduction. “Identity is defined *positively*, as the particular and finite expression of a dynamic substance, and as an expression that affirms becoming in general” (Giffney 2008, 88). Within animal-attentive queer theories, identity and community are about not a given present but the potentials, ways and possibilities to actualize the present and relations we want to see. A positivity within animal-attentive queer theories “leads to an ethics of desire, affirming one’s own becoming is maximized in the becoming of others” (Giffney 2008, 88). This theoretical attention places values within the connections of and desires for life as productive, dependent on the beings involved, and suggestive of political possibilities. As an example, within an ethics of representation, a positivity purports “our capabilities as immanent entities would flourish best in a context of generous mutual support for all life forms...acceptance of imminence implies a recognition and respect of the other, and hence a rejection of all

forms of exploitation and inequality (Sullivan 2009, 91). The positivity of animal-attentive queer theories should not be read in a way that argues for a move out of unintelligibility or difference and into intelligibility and sameness. There can be power in becoming unintelligible as a representational and political move that critiques the limits of the structures in which one becomes unintelligible. In this way there should not be something necessarily ethically wrong with becoming unintelligible. The undercurrent of positivity within animal-attentive queer theories argues that one should engage across the false binary between intelligible and unintelligible subjects to understand the structures that produce such a division as restrictive, oppressive, and in need of change.

Annemarie Mol, a medical anthropologist whose work shows the ways disease and body ontologies become multiple in practice, contends that doing theory must remain open in its engagement towards a transmuting politics that can effect change.

She argues:

The term *politics* resonates openness, indeterminacy. It helps to underline that the question ‘what to do’ can be closed neither by facts nor arguments. That it will forever come with tensions—or doubt. In a political cosmology ‘what to do’ is not given in the order of things, but needs to be established. Doing good does not follow on finding out about it, but is a matter of, indeed, doing. Of trying, tinkering, struggling, failing, and trying again (Mol 2002, 177)

The recognition of a multiple ontology effects the ways in which we maintain a politically committed scholarship. She argues that “without a final conclusion [within ontology] one may still be partial: open endings do not imply immobilization” (Mol 2002, 184). The relationship between an ethics of representation and an ethics of practice should always be suggestive and open ended rather than in a binary or opposing relationship. An entangled empathy depends upon to both the imaginings of

the empathizer to understand what is a good life and relation with the other and the impulse to action felt within such an empathetic engagement. We must focus on the intra-active forces that bring us into alliance by stressing the diverse values, contextual commitments, and attentions within a community actors as productive of change. The indeterminacy or partiality of ontologies within animal attentive queer theories enable further discussion around our relations and entanglements through a robust political practice to end the suffering and oppression of all others. In the animal-attentive queer sense doing ethics should move reject a theory/practice divide as ineffective and realistic by maintain an ecofeminist and queer commitment and attention to the different ways power, hierarchy oppression can manifest in our lives.

### *Humility and Failure*

Gayle Rubin, in connection to the queer politics of shame in the face of gay and lesbian identity politics, troubles the seemingly absolutist stance in any political project. She notes that “it is an exercise in futility to anoint any particular critical stance or political movement with permanent transgressive or revolutionary status...temporary inflammations are mistaken for permanent potencies” (Halperin 2009, 370). We as ethically motivated agents must keep in mind the ephemeral status of any political project. Not only should we be motivated to keep interrogating new and different ways to politically change the world around us for the better but we must humbly challenge our own political methods in their temporal specificity. Rubin argues:

such considerations lead [her] to suggest that along with pride and shame, we should be giving due consideration to humility: humility about the inevitability of change; humility about the imperfection of our formulations; and humility toward the decisions of the past, which were made in different circumstances

and under different conditions to meet a different set of needs...History makes fools of us all, sooner or later. We can only hope that it is later, and do our best to ensure that the positive contributions outweigh the collateral damage (Halperin 2009, 371).

It is this looking towards the past in conjunction with a commitment to affirmative readings that is important to maintain within animal-attentive queer theories. An action takes place in the present only to become the object of interrogation later. The present state of animal-attentive queer theories is only possible through the histories of feminist theories, queer theories, animal ethics, animal liberation, and science studies in their attempts to formulate what would be political projects to produce more ethical engagements and better experiences in the lives of others.

In terms of an animal-attentive queer ethics of representation, J. Jack Halberstam argues that there is a great potential to thinking through the queer art of failure. She notes that queer people have continually been socialized to think of themselves as failures that lie outside of heteronormative structures and representations (Halberstam 2011). Failure then becomes central in a queer formulation of desire in that our connections are forged within a failed subjectivity—queers look to and desire other queers. Queer is cast as failure since norms and intelligible identities are seen as the performative goals of success (Halberstam 2011). Queerness, and I would argue an animal-attentive queerness, is integral to the critique of capitalism and the narrative of progress and success in that animal-attentive queerness imagines other goals for a life. Such goals move beyond winning and losing into representation of the love of becoming, alliance formed through that love, and lives that are not lost to capitalist structures of exploiter/exploited. Halberstam maintains that the queer art of failure is not so much a prescriptive

project than a suggestive one. Failure and the disruption of success narratives is a mode of thinking through anti-capitalist and animal-attentive queer forces of connection and community formation.

Halberstam offers a scene in the movie *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* as an example of the theoretical power the practice of thinking through failure can be for (animal-attentive) queer theories. The movie is a stop-motion animated film that depicts the struggles between an (anthropomorphized) animal community and three farmers attempting to eradicate the threatening community. The specific scene is in the latter part of the movie where the main character Mr. Fox is riding on a motorcycle with three other animal characters having just escaped near death in attempts to rescue a kidnapped animal kin. While ethereal music begins to play in the background, Mr. Fox and the others are entranced by the presence of a wolf who's body is animated as a flat black silhouette. Mr. Fox attempt to speak with the wolf in English, Latin, and French but remarks that the wolf "doesn't seem to speak" or respond to his questions in any way. Overcome with tears and in a final attempt to communicate Mr. Fox raises his fist in a black power salute and the wolf then raises his own fist in response. Mr. Fox remarks on the beauty of the wolf and wishes him luck before the wolf moves off into the forest to the right of the screen. Charged with racial and gendered overtones, the scene has remained controversial in its depiction of the relation between a speaking and culture Mr. Fox and the silent, black wolf. Wes Anderson, the screenwriter of the film, in response to such critiques has commented "the scene is the film".

The failed linguistic communication yet ultimately produced relation between Mr. Fox and the wolf suggest to Halberstam that there is a great potential for (animal-

attentive) queer theories to think through failure. Mr. Fox's encounter with the wolf animates the limits between society and the wild, language and silence, darkness and lightness, human and animal, and the constant interplay between becoming intelligible and unintelligible. The wolf reminds the viewer of the limits of an animation and its anthropomorphism through the movie. By putting ourselves in the Mr. Fox's position, we are reminded of the ways in which animals do not speak human languages yet can still communicate with, call upon and respond to us through different means of becoming. The suggestive power of thinking animal-attentive queer failures produces an epistemic and ontological anchor through realizing that animal-attentive queerness resides in the spaces that the state or language fears. These kinds of failures are suggestive of political and subjective forms and theories that can disrupt state and sado-humanist structures of domination. Such a change in the ethics of representation can be a powerful tool in changing the ways we understand and build alliances through our parallel becomings as individuals. The critique of success, as well as, the practice of thinking through animal-attentive queer art of failures recall the ways in which my previously described framework of animal-attentive queer theories called for a radical change in ontology that maintains a critique of the capitalist structures that disavowal queer and animal others.

### *Grief and Empathy*

As outlined by the notion of 'precarious life' and the political practice of entangled empathy, animal-attentive queer theories draws an ethics and power from the exercise of grief and empathy. Animal-attentive queer theories are in this way a break from previous practices of thinking, engaging, theorizing and critique that

maintained either a sado-humanist logic or a politically disengaged ethics of representation. The grief that would come from thinking through the deaths of millions of slaughtered animals within the US alone in response to consumer demands is overwhelming. The grief felt through our entangled empathy with these others can provide an important motivation that evidently we currently lack as a society. Gruen suggests that people “may be motivated to end the distress [of an other] because it causes them discomfort, others may be moved because they are unable to imagine themselves in a situation in need in which others do not come to their aid, others may be motivated because their sense of themselves as an empathetic person requires it”, the grief we feel in the empathically imaging the suffering of others or some combination will act as the motivation behind empathetic actions (Gruen 2011, 19). Importantly, entangled empathy “involves both affect and cognition and will necessitate action” (Gruen 2011, 19). The motivation to act is cultivated in our ability to empathize with all others—something we desperately need to do more of within society. By coming together in empathetic bonds and alliance we can begin to understand the lives of others and formulate strategies and politics to enact change. Such an understanding moves across disciplines in a body politic that takes account of scientenic understandings of our differing organismal biologies, feminist calls for reproductive justice, animal-attentive theories of subjectivity, as well as queer anti-capitalist struggles for economic justice. The entangled empathy within animal-attentive queer theories is not an absolute politics but one motivated to effect change and progression towards a more ethical society.

There are simple things we can begin to do as humans within worlds that are organized around the domination of others. We must begin to think about the ways

we can change our actions to both acknowledge and ethically relate to all including animal others. Queer theories that rely upon a sado-humanist logic are self-defeating in their disavowal and non-recognition of animal others that have and should come to matter within our communities. Animal studies must recognize the ways in which theories, writings, and actions must include political practices that reflects a change and value in the relations we have to real animals within our lives. As humans we unfortunately have the ability to literally buy into capitalist institutions that support the torture, suffering and denial of animal life. As called for within animal-attentive queer theories, we must think through the ways we can fight against such capitalist systems of oppression as well as support the formation of new institutions and relations that do not disavow animal experience, life, and desire but instead cultivate a human becoming that is enriched by the becomings of others. In reflection on our own embodied lives, we can make small changes such as contextual vegetarianism, starting conversations on the ways our lives intersect with the lives of others, ways of thinking and practicing that increase our entangled ability to empathize with and ethically act, speak for, and live with others, and trying again and again through many failures to use our lives as forces of change so that no one is left behind.

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